













A DAUGHTER  
OF ADAM

---

CORRA HARRIS





# A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

BY

CORRA HARRIS

AUTHOR OF "THE EYES OF LOVE," "MY SON," "HAPPILY  
MARRIED," "A CIRCUIT RIDER'S WIFE," "THE  
RECORDING ANGEL," ETC.

AND IN COLLABORATION WITH FAITH HARRIS LEECH:  
"FROM SUNUP TO SUNDOWN"

NEW



YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

*copy 2*

423  
H2406  
Ja  
copy 2

COPYRIGHT, 1923,  
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY



COPYRIGHT, 1923,  
BY THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY

A DAUGHTER OF ADAM. II

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

MAR 30 '23

© C1A698878



A DAUGHTER OF ADAM





# A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

## PART ONE

### CHAPTER I

I sat up, startled out of a deep sleep. Who had called me? I felt called. And there were no voices. Stillness, an immense silence.

The room was dark but strangely familiar, as if the very things in it had known me a long time. I leaned forward and stared through the open window—pale greenish-ivory boughs spreading there beneath a lavender mist of bloom in the moonlight. Ah, I remembered now, the crape myrtle tree outside my bedroom window at Redfields!

All this in the first flash of consciousness after the profound unconsciousness of sleep.

Instantly I recalled what had happened. The message that reached me three nights ago in New York announcing father's illness and summoning

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

me to his bedside. The scattering of a party of friends who had been dining with me that evening, as fine feathers whirl and disappear in a sudden gust of wind. Oliver Winchell waiting while I changed and flung a few things together in my bag. The mad rush to catch the midnight train. That last moment in the deep shadow beyond the station gate when Oliver caught me to his breast, his anguish at this parting, like a lover's, deeper than his sympathy with my grief. Then the long hot journey, the sleepless night above rattling rails. The delays, the unbearable suspense. My arrival at last in the gray dawn of this day at Redfields, the pallor of everything in this light, the creeping silence of wakeful people in the house, the sibilant coming and going of neighbors all day long, the awful curiosity of the living about the approach of death, or if death might by the hardest be kept out of this house. And now the end of the day when I had fallen asleep exhausted by the long strain.

I sprang hastily to my feet, feeling guilty of this rest, and slipped noiselessly across the hall to the open doorway of a deeper silence.

The nurse seated beside the night lamp, busy with her chart, looked up and motioned me not to enter, meaning that this was sleep at last and that it must not be disturbed.

Through the shadowy darkness I made out the



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

immense bed in the midst of this room. It was a bed not made for any man, but for one man who excelled other men and who would not jam his breath against walls in a corner but must lie prominent even when he slept. The covers on it were awry, dragged and tumbled as if some old Jupiter had been kicking his clouds about and was now wrapped in them with his huge knees sticking up, his head resting high upon the pillows, his face the tragic gray shadow of a great countenance with closed eyes and bristling brows.

I withdrew and came softly down the stairs, hearing again the creak of the very steps that used to creak long ago beneath my younger feet.

I had been born in this house, in that proud old room upstairs where father now lay having it out with his last enemy. But for years it had been no more than a memory, like verses learned in childhood. Now each familiar object came back to me like a line from these verses. The flaming feathered birds perched on golden harps in the gray wall paper seemed to sing a flowery tale of fairer years. There was the same round table halfway down the wide hall, the same old mahogany sofa magnificently withdrawn at the farther end, the gun rack behind the front doors, the tall clock opposite the stairway with its raucous tick, still rebukingly truthful.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

How far apart every thing seemed—not bare but spacious, as if this house had been built by men for men with a long stride; nothing small or merely pretty in it, nothing weak or superfluous. A hurricane might blow through it and do no great damage, everything was so far apart, so heavy, and had been where it was for such a long time.

I experienced a curious sense of expansion, as if my mind let go little things and spread in this ancient spaciousness. The great doors of this hall were flung wide. I passed through on to the flagged floor of the veranda. A low wall divided this veranda from the grounds beyond. I moved across between the scattered chairs and sat on the wall, leaning against the column behind me.

Not in years had I seen such a huge night, clear, hot, and blossoming with stars. No narrowness anywhere, no masses of buildings, nor spires, nor towers to break the dark rim of this darkness. No dew, no scent, save the dusty odor of the famished earth in a midsummer drought. Not a sound save the crickets strumming in the withered grass and the whispering of poplar leaves turning and turning in the moonlight like a thousand tiny silver fans.

There is no darkness compared to the blackness to be found in the cities. But it is always inside, never above. It gathers in cells, behind the doors of poverty and crime. Night there is only the eve-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

ning gown the town wears when the day's work is done, slashed and seamed and pearled with myriad lights, fantastically splendid; but it lacks the majesty and mystery of infinite darkness.

I had been for so many years the companion of these noisy, tinkling, spangled nights that now I had no thoughts equal to this vastness, peopled with stars and shadows; only a vague fear when from time to time I looked up at the windows of father's room, listening, waiting for what might be going to happen there.

At last, as one invariably slips back from every other experience, however strange or terrifying, into that which is familiar, I found myself thinking of my own affairs; ordinary things, such as what had I done with the key to my apartment? I had forgotten to leave instructions about forwarding the mail. I remembered suddenly that the proofs of my book lay on my desk, still to be corrected. I must write to Oliver about this, about everything. I would ask him to send the proofs to Redfields.

Ten years ago I had gone to New York, as so many men and women go, to achieve a career. This is a brave thing to do, but we do not know that until we are committed to the adventure. I was in no need of a career. Few women are; we only choose one from lack of interest or because we are dissatisfied in whatever condition we find ourselves.



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

This was exactly my situation. Father was a man who kept his womenkind in the background, simply by occupying the whole front of life. Mother had died there when I was a young girl, quite peacefully, of that feminine inanition which destroys so many women. I had no mind for such a fate. I had been born with a bee in my bonnet. My gender, it appeared, was an accident. I had the nature of a woman, but the will and courage of my father, who was very man. We loved each other. We even suffered from a sort of indignant admiration for each other, but we could no more endure one another than two restless and affirmative bodies can occupy the same space at the same time.

Finally, after a series of violent scenes, I was permitted to have my wish, which was to go to New York and earn my living as a writer. My only qualification for this profession at the time was a certain passion for words, as another might love lines and colors, and a few things accepted by adventurous editors. It made no difference, father scornfully informed me, what kind of writer I became, so that I did not return to Redfields until I was sobered and humbled by some kind of success.

This condition was momentary. Many times during the years that followed he had implored me to come home, but with that manly perversity which I had inherited from him I put off the prodi-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

gal's return until I should have made the big success which every author covets.

There is a difference between honest thinking and the mere manufacture of ideas. To think correctly one must have a creed, some kind of faith which purges and exalts the mind. And one must have standards by which to test human experience. In the manufacture of ideas one uses the same mental machinery without reference to creeds or standards of life. One simply reproduces impressions, however perverted or fallacious. This is an unscrupulous business, but profitable—especially to writers of fiction. The truth is difficult to dramatize and hard to sell. It is much easier to produce the fiction antics of human nature, its decadent moods and frailties. I wrote this kind—popular stuff—and got away with it. I assumed a name, a man's name, and literally earned it in the best as well as the worst magazines in this country. It was like living a double life. I had a taste for that. Most people have, especially women, who have no privacy, their virtues and limitations being known to all men. For five years I enjoyed the privilege of hearing my stories discussed, branded as infamous, praised as the work of a man with genius, before I was discovered. Then I was obliged to take my place in a certain reeling, dissolving circle of artists and literary folk. But to this day there are

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

some tens of thousands of readers in this country who have never surrendered their contention that the name signed to this chronicle is that of a man, or at the very least an elderly woman who wears a little black Sabbath bonnet on the prayerful head of her pieties and a rusty cape over her philosophy of life.

However that may be, one thing is certain: Since the year 1910, when this performance of mine began in New York, I have lived. Like father I had a gift for living, rather than that one many women have for merely suffering. I craved excitement, folly, wisdom, and my own share of the spoils. I was never satiated nor tired of the fray. I had health, red hair, a clear skin, a rollicking energy of the spirit and what you may call an open-faced, blue-eyed mind. There are words that suggest certain colors, like "resurrection," which recalls that first tender golden green of leaves in the early spring. So the word "candor" always seemed to me of an entrancing shade of blue, an artless word like the eyes of a child, who sees everything and occasionally exposes something with unconscious but impish wit. In this sense I had a candid mind, neither malicious nor merciful, but enterprising and irresponsible about tearing the covers off the hidden thoughts of other people and writing them into whatever I happened to be writing at the time, with-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

out knowing or caring where I obtained them. Nothing can be more innocent. It is a sort of right of way one gets through the minds of his fellow men and uses like any other franchise. This accounted in some measure for the uncanny quality of my most trivial stories; also for a certain fearful distinction I had among the men and women of my own profession. I was the least cynical, the most believing disciple of human nature among them. But I had a reputation for satire, which is what many people think the truth is.

In spite of the fact that I had worked and played furiously during these years, now at the age of thirty-two my youth was still preserved by this fortunate circumstance: I had never lacked for lovers. One lover cannot do it, however faithful, but one lover after another may keep a woman ageless a long time after she is no longer really young. Each of them discovers in her a different cause for enchantment, so that at last all her banners are flying, every vanity and every virtue exalted by these standard bearers of love. I was splendidly endowed with this sense of charm and power which frequent and different lovers unconsciously develop in a woman. I had a reputation for discretion, which enhanced me. I was a cheerful and unscrupulous capitalist who owned myself. I was one of those women whom men court with a vindictive will



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

to win, chiefly for the victory of the achievement.

I do not think well of this interpretation of myself, but it is truthful—and the truth about any one of us is rarely flattering if we tell the whole of it. Still if you are a woman it is something not to be vanquished and to have kept your heart and liberty with a sort of singing, humorous valor. For, after all is said, every lover is an adversary. One is not morally bound to yield, and one is not morally obliged to be less lovable for conscience's sake. That indicates a kind of simpleton's conceit which I never had.

For more than a year I thought I should end by marrying Oliver Winchell. "End" is the last word of every woman's imagination about marriage. It is the one full stop she makes in life at an early age, and she really never expects to get over it or go on or be her own self again. I have often wondered if men feel the same way.

Nature appeared to have made Oliver with probably two strokes of a very pale pencil. He was a tall man, graceful with that angular grace of a delicately articulated frame. His knees and elbows were prominent, as if at all times he folded himself with an eye to the shadow he might make on the wall or the image he might cast upon the retina of some eye. His face was a poem for which you

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

could find only the rhythm, not the words—lean, pallid and very handsome. Dark hair, luminous eyes, not feminine in their softness, but mystical, as if he might have been a prophet but was not, being utterly and intentionally indifferent to the spiritual exercise of prophesying. Mentally he achieved those subtleties which do not exist but must be created, emotions so delicate that the human of you does not feel them. Attenuated spiritual stuff which denied matter as something negligible, if not actually repulsive. I cannot say why, but his thoughts always seemed to me to come up out of the grave, stone images of the imagination in forlorn poses of negation.

He wrote so well that he rarely published anything. I am certain that he did not care, as the rest of us did, to see his mind advertised in the printed word. He was serious and industrious, however, at this business of dissolving language. But any real effort was offensive to him. He was honestly convinced that there could be no rational reason for achievement. What had been achieved was not good and would not last. The only thing that lasted was dead dust. The minute life infested anything the processes of decay began. Life, he swore, was a perpetual form of decay and decadence.

He was a very rich man, but he despised money,

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

using it frugally and decently, like a poor man with fine virtues. The clawing, scrambling acquisitive world to Oliver was like the fox the Spartan boy carried beneath his cloak without a murmur even while the fox devoured him. It was this air of high fortitude which attracted me. An immaterial man in a material universe appealed to my imagination, and in secret to the mischievous humor all women feel toward men. He was a new adventure in the kingdom of love, and as a lover he had a gossamer use of words, very flattering to one who had been so frequently courted according to her strictly feminine realities. I was no metaphysician, but a woman easily taken in by a florescent lover because there was nothing in Oliver's pale passion which inspired the usual defenses against him. I do not know why it is the instinct of every woman to deny her instincts, but it is. Modesty is a garment her mind weaves and wears to conceal her natural emotions. There was no occasion for such feminine privacy between Oliver and me, because he inspired no such emotions. I simply enjoyed the odd distinction of being the dear anathema of his spirit; the woman whom he resented above all other women because her very existence stultified his convictions and gave a meaning to life, when from his point of view life had no intelligible meaning, but was a sort of recurrent disease in aimless dust. I

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

leave it to those who have studied the various effects of decadence to explain why he excited in me the keenest interest and curiosity.

But now, seated in this tranquil darkness, watching the black shadows thicken beneath the drifting moon over Redfields, I began to think of Oliver with a strange lassitude. I tried to visualize him. How would I feel toward him here? Standing upon this scroll of land that rolled away into the vast darkness, I felt that he would be strangely diminished. He did not belong. He would be no more than one of those rarefied sentences that he could write. And in this place such a sentence would not mean anything. For here was something older than civilizations or cities or the attenuated intellectual dust of men's minds. This was the great countenance of the Earth, the big thing, the one tremendously real thing that neither changed nor passed, upon which the Lord breathed the winds in the beginning, before ever Adam received the breath of life—still functioning like the almighty will of God, forever living, forever silent, keeping the confidence of all men's bones. What could Oliver say commensurate with this? And the worst of it was that I felt that he would say something.



## CHAPTER II

Sometimes you may be born again, as you were the first time, by no will of your own. The wind of destiny gets you, blows you out of the world that was your world and out of the life that was your life. Your former thoughts and deeds pass away. They are not. And you begin to be again, shriven of yourself, of your diaphanous vanities, of the very virtues that fitted you so well but are now far too small.

Until this moment I had no sense of permanency in this wide place. I had been called to Redfields by father's illness. Presently I should return to New York, where my life and my work lay straight before me. I was still thinking of Oliver as a possession, open to criticism, no more maybe than a sort of intellectual condiment, but belonging to me and to the existence I had chosen. But now I recalled something that Doctor Fosberry had said to me in the late afternoon.

I had followed him from the room where father lay tossing upon his bed, unable to speak, equally unable to sleep, regarding us with a fierce question in his clouded eyes.

"He will be quiet presently. This is merely the

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

momentum of his violent vitality. It will pass. He will be changed," he had said.

"How changed?" I asked tremblingly.

He laid his two hands upon my head, drew them with rough tenderness over my hair.

"Thick as a horse's tail, Nancy! Still red and rumped. It used to be the color of the freckle on your nose. Bless me, lass, you have not lost that freckle, have you?" he exclaimed, holding me at arm's length, turning my face to the light, pursing up his lips and squinting at me through his glasses.

"Ah, there it is; you have kept it, the little sun kiss!" he murmured, nodding his head approvingly.

"I was the first man to lay eyes on you, Nancy! You came into the world in a fine rage. You had both fists doubled. It was here at the head of these stairs that I laid you in your father's arms," he went on, rearing back, as if he still held this lively burden.

"Your father was coming up the steps, taking them two at a time, his long legs working like pistons. 'Is it a boy?' he roars.

" 'No, it's a witch,' I told him, and laid you in his arms.

"He was mad as fire, wanting a son. But you defied him. You blazed him a glance. You bowed your back and yelled. You fought him. He was afraid of you!

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“ ‘Kedie McPherson,’ I said, ‘you have begotten what will turn you and rule you at last.’ ”

“But you were saying just now—” I began.

“And you did, Nancy, you had us all going. You had no sense but your own sense, no will but your own will. I remember the day you ran away—not three years old—your father raging up and down this place with everybody on it looking for you. Your mother, poor lady, lying in a dead faint, for fear of what might have happened to you, and me running about distracted with physicking her and waiting for news from the searchers.

“They never did find you! But toward the middle of the afternoon you toddled round the corner of the house. And you had this freckle on your nose. You went off and got it, and that has been your way always. You would have what you wanted,” he concluded and regarded me attentively, the crinkles about his eyes fading.

“But there are things that come to us, lass. We do not seek them. They come,” he began again.

“Yes, about father, you were saying just now that he will be—changed. How do you mean?” I urged, seeing that during these fine speeches there was a mist of tears in his eyes.

“I cannot tell you, my dear,” he answered, sighing. “He will be different. Never again the man he has been. Nature, Nancy, has clapped a lid on

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

him. He will live, I think. He will recover his speech, he may be fairly active, but he will never come out from under. A slight stroke, but enough to put the whole man that he was away."

He stood looking down while he told me this, the sun shining from the window through his thin white hair on the pink skin beneath, the tears glistening on his cheeks. A little round-bodied man in a black frock coat that hung away from his legs, because he always seemed to be walking out of his coat.

"You understand, don't you?" he asked. "It means that he needs you," he explained gently.

"Yes," I whispered.

"Your place and your duty are here at Redfields. You cannot go back to New York."

"No, not now," I answered faintly.

"Not until he is gone. It may be years."

We stood for a moment in this silence.

"Do you mind so much?" he asked.

"I can think now only of father—what you have told me," I evaded.

"The heart of you speaks, Nancy! Time comes when life drops out of her periods, and that is the end of the sentence. You cannot change it, even if it falls, as this one does, in the middle of your own career. We are all proud of you, but you have other work laid out for you here. It is finer than the



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

writing of a fine book, and it will not be so bad once you are used to it—to him, I mean,” glancing at me. “Nature made Kedic McPherson a great man, but not a good one. You will probably have a tremendous child on your hands.”

“Child?” I repeated.

“Well, something like that. I have told you. He could be changed some and no great harm done. There was a strain of flaming peat in him. You know what I mean. He lived in a blast. The smoke of his deeds has been curling about here for fifty years. The wonder is that such a conflagration of a man could last so long. Now it is over. The peat smolders and the wind of his will has died down. It will not come again.”

I felt that this kind old man who had seen me into the world was now trying with awkward tenderness to close the door of it to me. What he had been saying had a meaning beyond that of his Ossian eloquence in disposing of father’s roaring career.

“What are you trying to tell me?” I demanded.

“That you have a man’s task before you here, as well as a woman’s tender duties,” holding me now with a steady gaze, as one supports another across a dangerous passage.

“Yes, what is it? Go on!” I exclaimed, feeling the chill of some disaster.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“Your father has been slipping for years. He has lost more than a thousand acres of Redfields plantation. What remains of it is mortgaged—this house, everything.”

With my eyes still fixed on his a shadow black as blind darkness seemed to pass between us. In the bright sunlight I could not see his face. I experienced a curious dizziness, as if all familiar things were passing away. I did not know until this moment that Redfields had never ceased to be the very foundation of my life, that subconsciously even during these last years in New York this roof was still the personal private roof over my head.

Somehow I found my hand in his, held tightly with trembling strength.

“Come here,” he said, drawing me to the window.

“Do you see that gap in the Big Woods?” He indicated a wide stretch of land through the trees.

“Never before has there been a break in that forest. Six hundred acres of the finest timberland in the state. Last winter your father sold it, the whole tract, and the cleared land this side as far as the river.”

“But why?” I gasped.

“Had to do it. Price of cotton down. Notes falling due that he could not meet. And there was the interest on the mortgage. You know what a

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

magnificent notion he had of his integrity. Every debt was a debt of honor to him. This made his credit rating fabulous, and he was reckless."

"But how did he contract these debts? Father, as I remember him, was—frugal," I said, hesitating over the last word, to make it kind since he lay stricken, but mindful that an old contention between us had been his parsimony.

"Yes," he admitted, "in a way he was the stingiest man I ever knew about little things. He would always borrow a match to light his pipe, rather than use one of his own."

We exchanged a smile, recalling a certain legend connected with father.

One spring morning years ago, after a particularly stormy revival in Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, the congregation assembled on the banks of Redfields River to witness the ceremony of baptizing recent converts to the faith.

The people stood among the tall alder flowers and wild lilies, silent, waiting with bowed heads. Suddenly every man removed his hat as the preacher waded out into the stream, his long coat tails floating on it, accompanied by Archie Winch, who was about to be baptized to make sure of the remission of his sins, which were many, because he was old, and a blacksmith, and had the flare of his red forge on his reputation. At this solemn moment, when noth-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

ing should have occurred to distract the concentration of prayers upon old Archie, father, who towered conspicuously above everybody else, stepped forth, his broad white hat crushed politely to God beneath his arm, his hair rising like a red crest above his fine fierce face, and created a scandalous hiatus between the carnal and the spiritual. He wanted a match. He made a hasty canvass among the men for one, and when it appeared that no man carried matches in his strictly Sabbath pockets father, looking slightly critical of his fellow men, whisked a hand hastily into his own pocket, drew forth a small silver box he always carried filled with matches and artlessly spent one, cupping his long fingers against the wind over the bowl of his pipe and sending a fine spiral of smoke just as the preacher thrust Winch deep beneath the purling flood with solemn invocations.

“But when it came to his sense of himself he was tremendous,” Doctor Fosberry went on after a pause. “He would not commit a small sin nor practice any of the minor virtues. If he needed only a hundred dollars he borrowed a thousand, out of a sort of contempt for owing any man a little debt.”

“How well you knew him,” I said with a sigh.

“You must just forgive him, Nancy, and do the best you can with what is left. You can save it. These hills and valleys have bred McPhersons since



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

this state was a British colony. You have the brains and courage to clear it of the mortgage, as the first Kedic McPherson cleared the forests from this rich red land. Don't let go! That is what your father was doing. He had lost his man's grip on the land that made him and kept him!"

The woman I had become refused to meet this challenge. I turned and stood staring through the window at the wide level land as one looks at a page of history which was once the history of his family, but no longer is, because the breed you have become does not make history but money, probably, or a name, or some transient distinction. You have become a current event. You do not last.

I was thinking something like that as my gaze wandered across the fields to the break in the forest on the hills beyond.

"Who bought the Big Woods?" I asked indifferently.

"Manson, Black Manson," Doctor Fosberry answered.

"The name is not familiar," I said.

"Nor the man. Stranger. Dropped down here like a young eagle from nowhere, with his pockets full of gold, and bought that land of your father's before we knew it was for sale," he told me.

"He built a shack the first winter on the edge of the woods overlooking Redfields. This is all I

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

know about him, except that he is a terrific worker and minds his own business—unless sitting on his doorstep in the evening and overlooking Redfields is not his business. Your father resents that as the act of a prideful enemy. He suspects Manson covets the remainder of Redfields,” he added significantly.

But I made no reply to that. I went back and asked him some questions about father. He looked at me strangely, as if he also asked a question of me, as if he had some doubt in his mind about me which troubled him. I cannot tell; possibly it was the pallor and weariness he saw written there. At any rate he turned after he had started down the stairs.

“Go now and get some rest. You need it,” he said kindly, as if he made this excuse for cowardice in a McPherson.

It was then that I had gone to my room, flung myself upon the bed and had fallen into that deep sleep of exhaustion.

### CHAPTER III

Now for an hour I had been sitting on the old veranda wall, refusing to think of what Doctor Fosberry had told me. I could not bear it. Father would recover, I insisted to myself. Other men survived such a stroke and went on with their affairs for years. I could manage to pay the interest on this mortgage, hold the place so long as he lived, then let it go. I must live in New York. The scenes of my working mind lay there, Oliver was there, and I had promised to marry Oliver. That settled it.

But nothing was settled. A strange weariness fell upon me, as if all this land pressed against my breast, living, and kin to me closer than father was kin. I was of it before ever I became flesh and blood. I should be it again after I had ceased to be flesh and blood.

The night prompts us and we know things that we cannot know in the obvious light of day. I doubt if there is any such thing as superstition. What we call by that name is something our very recent faculty of reason cannot admit, lacking proofs. But it is a deeper wisdom than mere knowledge, lying very still and ages old; things we do not learn but have

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

always known. Sometimes in our dreams or in the dark, which is the great dream of Nature, it comes back to us, not in words, but that which was before words, a mere feeling, always convincing to us but not to our reason.

Just so, I remembered now, how I had been startled from sleep up there in my room awhile ago, thinking I had been called, only to feel the presence of things that knew me in the darkness and silence. What I had heard was not a voice, but it was the Land, deep and mysterious, speaking to me, claiming me!

The blissful beauty of the night passed away. These hills had fallen upon me. These stars had become my prison keepers. This darkness was my pall. This place was to be my grave. And there is no valor in the grave!

“Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” I whispered, flinging my hands up in a sharp gesture of despair.

Then it came over me that I had quoted some sort of Scripture. Not in years had any words of which prayers are made passed my lips. What spell was this binding me now to awful and eternal things?

The folds of the loose silk robe I wore glistened like pale green moonlight. I drew it closer about me, leaned back and closed my eyes; I do not know for how long. At last some soft sound disturbed



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

me. I glanced instinctively at the windows of father's room. No movement there. I stared out over the lawn, listening intently to this measured whisper of a sound, sibilant through the withered grass, as if the shadows were beginning to walk. Then I saw one appear between the two poplar trees, erect, moving across these other shadows and coming toward me.

I held my breath with that protective gesture a woman has of pressing her hand to her breast lest her heart escape with it if she lets go this breath. If you are a woman and in the dark the instinctive, fearing nature of you is always to expect some kind of masculine apparition. It makes no difference how old or widowed or spinstered you are, subconsciously you are prepared to discover that "he" of life. It is a scandal of the feminine, from which neither chastity nor courage can deliver any of us.

I perceived that this was a man approaching. And by the directness with which he came I knew that his eyes were fixed upon me, although at this distance I could make out no more than the blurred lines of an immense figure.

After the first startled moment I relaxed. So many people had called during the day. This was some neighbor, I thought, coming to inquire about father. I leaned back with the moon shining full upon me and waited, too indifferent to do those

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

things to myself a woman always does when a man approaches, whatever kind of man he is, if she is in the natural vanity of her senses. Even if I should be walking along Fifth Avenue, at the sight of a man I knew my instinct—sternly repressed—was to touch my hair with fussing fingers, as a bird runs a preening bill through his wing feathers; or it was to arrange some adjective of myself, such as the girdle round my waist, or to glance helplessly at the toes of my shoes lest there should be dust on them. But now I sat mournfully depleted of every pride, watching this shadow advance, growing taller as it came—until suddenly it loomed before me, blotting out the moon, casting a deep shade over me.

What I saw was a man who might have been the posthumous son of Adam. He was young, yet he conveyed the impression of weariness and age. There was no grace in this huge frame, only strength and endurance. His head, covered with a mass of dark hair, literally seemed to stand on his shoulders. The poise of it meant so much that was invincible, as if he had erected it like a monument to stand and withstand everything. His skin was very dark, and he was sublimely homely, as if he had achieved this homeliness, this leanness of the jaws, this wide thin-lipped mouth made for silence, this forehead wrinkled above sweeping brows, by some terrific effort. His eyes were black, deeply sunken and far

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

apart, as if he reserved a wide and cleared space above them for his thoughts.

He regarded me with these eyes. And it was as if the night—not this one but a night somewhere in the remote beginning of time—looked at me.

I do not know how it happened, but I remember thinking with a sort of mental gasp, “This man would be hard to kill! He is life, all of it, and terrible!”

One may see more in a glance than can be told or accomplished in a lifetime. For one instant I stared up at him, a reeling gaze down the ages of man that wavered and fell before this one. There is a place where a woman keeps her courage, probably in one of the smaller dresser drawers of her mind, along with her spiritual handkerchiefs and prayer rituals, but it is never in her eye. She may flash you a look of love or meekness or temper and hold it long enough to be read, and she can die for her convictions, however trivial, or for her affections, however unworthily bestowed, without ever being able to brave you with a look as one man braves another man. I do not know why this is so, but it is, because more than once in my life I have tried it and failed, not from fear but for no other reason than that I am a woman.

So now before this incredible stranger my eyes fell.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Immediately I heard him say:

"Nancy McPherson," speaking not to me but to himself, in low tones, deep and smooth, as if he got them out of a big wind box in his chest and could have made them heard across mountains.

"Yes," I answered, giving him an interrogative stare, no longer than this little word, but meaning with a note of coolness in my voice that this was Miss McPherson, and who was he? He did not take the hint. He simply folded himself on the wall, well within confidential distance, stared past me and remained silent.

For a moment I was conscious of the robe I wore wrapped about me like a sheath. I was about to lift one hand to my rumpled hair, then I dropped it.

I had a sensation which I had never experienced before in the presence of any man—that of being erased, of having no feminine effect upon his consciousness. I had suffered a loss. He passed me with his eyes as if I were not there. He denied me some right I had to his consideration and sympathy.

As a rule a man instinctively notices a woman who is in the midst of some terrible grief. He is attracted to her, first because of the protective feeling he has, you may say, for the feminine of himself, but chiefly, I believe, because sorrow makes a woman soft, accessible, when she would yield neither to love nor pride. It is some fundamental weakness



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

in her that seeks his strength. The fact that the hunchback Duke of Gloucester courted and won Anne with the insolence of a monstrous courtship, even as she followed the body of her murdered lord, the king, to its grave, may be shocking to the decencies we have achieved, in spite of our nature, but it indicates how profoundly Shakspeare understood the frailty of the mourning nature of women and how daringly he could interpret it. There is nothing in this world so fearless and shameless as genius. It is the one thing which can and always does betray the very hidden truth of us regardless.

In the brief moment of silence that followed between us I regarded him with the wings of my mind spread and whirling. Hunched up on this wall he looked like a dusty young Enoch, who had been walking wearily with God across the land in seed-ing time. He suggested the big end of the Scriptures which were made before spiritual things began, when men lived in the real presence of God and were not required merely to live by faith in Him, but in literal obedience to His will according to the weather, the earth and her seasons.

The proud patience of this lean, strong face showing dark against the moonlight recalled to me something fearful that I had read long ago. I remembered it, not all, but in fragments, the ancient sentence pronounced upon Adam: "Cursed be the

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. . . . In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

I do not know how it happened, but he reminded me of this first divine imprecation, which has outlasted those later, hotter Scriptures dealing, you may say, with an improvised torment. For of this place we now have our rational, cheerful doubts. He appeared to me like one who has been nobly cursed without knowing it, informed with a curious majesty, who must be defeated, never by other men, but by the invincible elements of Nature.

He leaned forward and braced himself with his long arms stretched and his huge hands resting on the wall.

This slight movement broke the spell of my amazement. I experienced a faint resentment at the sight of these hands. They looked like two slaves, obedient to perform terrific tasks, but insensate, as if they had never touched anything soft nor caressed anything living.

I became conscious of this outrageous silence. Here was a strange man, making an apparition of himself with no more manners than an apparition. I might be postscriptural—many a modern woman

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

is—but he was not prehistoric. He had been born comparatively recently, however he looked, and he must know that it was the height of presumption to ignore a woman's presence as he had done for at least two minutes.

I made a movement indicating that I was about to rise and go in.

He caught me again with his cool impersonal gaze.

"Your father," he said. "I came to ask how he is."

"We hope he is better," I answered.

"He will recover. Such a man does not die easily. He is only defeated, not slain, by this stroke."

"Do you know my father?" I asked.

"Very well."

"You were friends?"

"No, enemies," he returned, as if he stated a fact regarding the weather or some other uncontrollable phenomenon of Nature.

Veracity, uncensored and unadorned by the softening language of something kinder or more cowardly than veracity, is the most offensive thing we are capable of. It is an unwarranted presumption against which there is no defense in polite society—and I belonged to polite society, very polite.

I drew back with an intaking breath and cut him a look. Father deserved his enemies if ever a man

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

did, but why should one of them trespass so near him, fallen now in the twilight between two worlds?

"I admired him beyond any man I have known," he went on, I felt without reference to my implied rebuke, but merely to say what he had to say.

"He knew nothing of the science of living as men must live now. He belonged to the age of heroes. They never made a civilization, but they produced all the great poetry we have by their infernally sublime deeds. They were real men; they had not been tampered with. They had no secrets, no shame and no fear. Your father was like that."

"Yes," I said, meaning, "Please go on!"

"He might have held what belonged to him against the robber barons of his own feudal age, but he had no defense against the shrewder cupidity of a commercial world," he concluded, standing up to take his leave, as if it made no difference what I might be going to say in reply.

"Do you see that light?" he asked, pointing toward a tiny spot of effulgence on the edge of the Big Woods, which I had not noticed until this moment.

"It shines from the window of my cabin. If you need me, if anything happens, swing a lantern out here. I will come," he said, turning upon his heels.

"You are Manson!" I gasped.



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“Yes, Black Manson,” he answered, without looking back as he moved off.

If you are a woman you are subject to more different kinds of mortification than a man can possibly suffer. For one moment I sat confused, oppressed by the revulsion of feeling that swept over me. It was not so much that this was the man who had got possession of the most valuable part of Redfields; it was the overwhelming appeal he had made to my imagination. I regretted the Scriptures and fine curses with which I had endowed him. I had been tricked by my own habit of creating imaginary characters out of living men and women. In fact, I reflected bitterly, Black Manson could not possibly bear the slightest resemblance to this sublime dumb soul of the dust which I had made of him in a flash of exalted fancy. He was probably some adventurer, sick of the world he had eaten or hiding from some deed he had done. In any case I would not make signals to call him if anything happened, as he suggested. There was a telephone in the house, and neighbors nearer than this stranger. I should ask no favors of Black Manson.

Still I came to my feet and stood looking the way he had gone. There was a road which approached the house coming up between the two poplar trees. I stood up on the wall. From the top of it I could

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

see this road stretching like a bright ribbon across the valley below and over the bridge on Redfields River, on across the breast of the hills beyond where it swept out of sight into the Big Woods.

I could see the tall form of Manson moving along this road in the moonlight, climbing the hills toward his cabin until he became a mere shadow that dissolved in the distance. Then a long flare of light up there, startling and bright, with Manson passing through it. Then darkness. The door of his cabin closed.

Once more I had the feeling of having seen a man who did not belong to mankind, but was closer kin to the ground, of original dust. Then I caught myself committing this folly, turned and stepped down from the wall.

Women are not trivial, but they can never resist doing in secret what their impulses dictate. They really suffer from imagination and ideality. This is why they are supposed to be more spiritual than men. They are only more romantic. They are all novelists in secret, with one prospective heroine and any hero, even if he is a man whom they hate and whom they would not recognize in real life. No one knows this about women but another woman. For Manson the trader, who had no doubt purchased Big Woods for half its value and might in fact con-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

template acquiring what remained of Redfields, I felt a strong antagonism, but as the man of awful attributes he appealed to me.

I would write to Oliver in the morning, I said to myself, much as a woman sometimes gets up when she is alone in her room and locks the door, even if it is broad daylight and no one is to be seen outside. She locks it against her own thoughts.

## PART TWO

### CHAPTER IV

The drought which had set in before I came home lasted through July. The very earth seemed to change back to dust. The Redfields pastures on Redfields River became a desert covered like an old man's face with a thin beard of dead grass. The river shrank to a tiny stream between stagnant pools. All day long the cattle moved up and down the bed of it, feeding upon the coarse swamp grass and crowding into these pools of slimy green water, where they stirred and milled like beasts in torment.

The young corn withered in the fields. I used to stand sometimes during these burning days between the two poplar trees at the end of the lawn and look down at this corn. It stood rank upon rank like a pale famished army filling the Redfields bottoms as far as the eye could reach, every blade curled like a sharpened spear. The tassels, no longer opulent with bloom, stood up stiffly like cockades above the heads of a valiant host. It was fearful and touching, the suffering of this corn, and very signifi-



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

cant of hunger and poverty to come. No country is so undefended as that one where the living green armies of the land fail.

I had forgotten what a drought means. People who live in cities never do know. If the weather is dry and hot they leave this weather and go where it is not hot. In any case there is the moisture of hourly showers from the sprinklers in every street of the town. Ten thousand fans revolve to cool it when not a wind stirs. There are iced foods and iced drinks and charity funds to send the children to the seashore, and hospitals for everybody, however poor, who sickens in this heat. The poor—even the very poor—are as well off as usual if they have money with which to buy. If they have not it is against the law to starve and they are fed. There is always an abundance of food. If the grain harvests fail in one section grain is shipped in from another section. Fruits, vegetables, refrigerated meats are all supplied. Nobody asks where they come from, only the price. But far out, a thousand or two thousand miles from this city, there are strips of fertile land, sentenced by Nature to parch like the desert for a year or for years. There are whole communities that grow poor in a season. These are the people who literally produce their own food, but have no money with which to buy it. They do not work for wages but for a livelihood. When

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

their crops fail they go bankrupt for a few dollars. They are sold out and move away like leaves blown in the wind. They get disorders from which they never recover. They sicken with fevers and survive—or they die. It makes no difference. Their creed is: “The Lord giveth, the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” So are they laid back into the dust from which they came. They are not only the meek, they are the very meek who do not inherit the earth.

McPherson County passed through such a drought that summer. And it was not the perishing corn in the Redfields bottoms that oppressed me most. It was the awful fortitude of the people; the small farmers, the tenants, the everlasting very poor next to the land. It appeared that they were not so much concerned about how they should live through the winter to come. They were anxious about their small accounts with the merchants and about how they should pay their rents. They themselves could not be sold to pay these debts, but their cow might be sold. The cow of a poor man is a sacred animal, no matter how lean she is. When everything else fails she is still his meager insurance against hunger.

The simplicity with which they faced their problems frightened me. It was a question to be decided by the weather, they agreed. If it rained they might still “pull through.” If it did not rain soon no man

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

of them knew what he would do. They let it go at that and watched the brazen heavens.

I also began to watch the heavens. I had grown soft, living so many years beyond the immediate reach of Providence. Whether I paid my bills at the end of the month in New York depended upon the success I had with editors and publishers. If one rejected a story another might take it. Somebody usually did. In any case I was already at work on another story. Thus my chances were doubled and trebled. But there is only one God, only one season in which a harvest can be made, on the land. If the rain fails to fall even upon the just there will be no harvest that year. Why then, I asked myself, did so many, many men risk this slender hope merely to live, and under conditions so harsh that the most wretched men away from the land will not endure them.

The answer to this question is not rational. It is Scriptural. You will find it in the first Seven Days of History, and nowhere else. Something happened then which is not recorded by its proper name in Genesis. The priesthood of the land was created then. It is an "order" like any other—but the oldest. From Adam down every man in it is ordained with a curse, terrible and beautiful. They are simple men, not chosen but born to the land. They hope no great hopes as other men do. They are

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

holden by no vision, but by a strange and awful relationship to their original dust. They never escape nor rebel, and they never grow rich by their own labors. They are the lowest and best class of men, so far removed in consciousness from everything but the land that they cannot be organized into unions or any other order for their own defense. They are the woeful ones who feed and enrich and bless mankind; the sublimely poor who starve but never beg. Their altars are the fields, and you will know them for priests of the land by their dusty garments and their bowed shoulders, as if with their very bodies they said "Thy will be done!"

But I was too far removed from these elder Scriptures or any other gospels then to realize this. My horror of the situation in which I found myself increased when I understood at last that father would never recover, and that sometimes death is very tardy about claiming his victims.

There is a man in every man, a woman in every woman, bound by no law, no love nor any duty, who is the very truth of us that we never speak—it is so veracious of what we really are. This one is the prisoner we keep, whose existence we never admit but whom we can neither silence nor destroy, not by the exercise of every virtue and every prayer carefully prayed. To the very last he gets up and claims secretly his own rights, the fulfillment of his



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

own desires regardless. And to the very last she creeps to the bars and regards you, the woman you must be and are in spite of her.

“My dear,” she whispers, “you know that I am really you. Why sacrifice me, your very self, for conscience’s sake? It is not your conscience. It is a bondage shrewdly imposed by mankind for their protection against each other and against you. What is duty or self-sacrifice? Merely an enormous contribution you make to the common fund, while you yield that which you really crave, and which would satisfy me as not one of your good deeds or even your virtues satisfies you. They only flatter you in your own eyes and in the eyes of the world!”

I atoned for this outlaw of myself with sincere filial devotion to father. Against Doctor Fosberry’s advice, I dismissed the nurse. Through the hot, breathless days I did not leave him. The nights were vigils kept beside his bed. Sometimes the darkness and silence there were nearly unbearable. In a city you may be without companionship, but you are never really lonely. There is always somewhere to go, so much to see. Here there was nowhere to go but to the window of father’s room, nothing to see but the stars above the immense shadow of the night, and that small dim light like the palest beam that shone from the door of Black Manson’s house on the edge of the Big Woods. I

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

had not seen him again but I remembered what he had said about signalling if I needed him. I thought of it constantly as you think of scenes in the life you would have and of the lines you would say but never do say. The biography of a woman cannot be written; so much of her life is purely imaginary. It consists of lovers she never had; of temptations she never knew; of revenges and powerful virtues she never had the chance to achieve.

I found little comfort in Oliver's letters, except that he wrote frequently; exquisite letters, filled with the delicate phrasing of his passion. But I seemed to have changed. His love no longer applied to me. When you have been suddenly thrust up against the elbows of the Almighty the fanciful wooing of even a brilliant man who has never felt the sharp pains inflicted by this Providence seems trivial and blasphemously inadequate.

Meanwhile I worked indefatigably. I corrected the proofs of my book and urged its early publication. In New York my earning capacity exceeded my needs, and even my extravagances. Now, I was afraid of this tremendous poverty which threatened me. Every acre of Redfields widened my fears—this great house, the drought and above all, father.

He had passed into the secondary stage of convalescence, to use Doctor Fosberry's phrase. He was now the victim of an inarticulate consciousness.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

And he was concerned about something. He appeared to be waiting and listening. There was one thing he wanted to know. This asking look was always in his eyes when I bent over him. He would turn his great head slowly on the pillow, and put it to me again with weary insistence. He showed no human impatience. He simply lay, the long gray, gaunt shadow of whatever this was that he wanted to know.

At last one day, quite unexpectedly, he recovered the power of speech.

"Nancy," he pronounced, making a great effort and speaking in the thick mutter of his deep voice.

"Yes, father!" I exclaimed softly, moved by this change.

"Go and look," he went on slowly.

"Yes, father; where?" I urged, fearful lest the awful silence of the past weeks should descend upon him again before he could finish.

"In the southwest—see if there is a cloud, no bigger than a man's hand." His voice trailed off into a hoarse whisper.

"No, dear," I answered presently, returning from the window, "but the north is dark with clouds."

He made a gesture, implying that clouds in the north were false prophets.

"The corn! The corn in the bottoms!" He moaned.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Tears filled my eyes. I understood at last what had been troubling him, a dim horror in his clouded brain—this drought. It came to me with a shock that he did not suspect his own illness. He no longer existed. This drought was his consciousness, and the perishing corn was his vision!

I recalled what I had long since forgotten—the way father used to sit bent over, with his face hidden in his hands during a dry season long ago, when I was a small child.

“Nancy, look and tell me if you see a cloud in the southwest, if it is no bigger than a man’s hand,” he would say, as if his own eyes could no longer brave the brazen skies.

I would sail forth and return presently with the discouraging weather report that there was no cloud in a proper part of the heavens. It all came back to me, the enveloping depression, the way the thunderheads used to boil up in the east, the hot blast of the wind that swept out and shook them and parted them and left the earth desert dry.

Now, of all his life, riven with grand deeds and fierce tempers, father remembered nothing—only hot skies during a drought, only the pallor of the famished corn in the bottoms.



## CHAPTER V

A railroad divides this place from the Armstead plantation. There is a station on our side called Redfields. About it lies a wide level tract of land containing exactly one hundred acres. This land is different from the lower river bottoms, being gray and lighter than the red clay. Since long before I was born it has always been planted in cotton if it was planted at all.

As the years passed a small settlement sprung up round Redfields station—the usual country store, with one corner boxed off for a post office, a cotton gin, a blacksmith shop and the inevitable grist mill.

After father began to improve I sometimes went there, partly for the walk but chiefly to get the afternoon mail, which usually consisted of a letter from Oliver, newspapers and circulars addressed to Kedic McPherson.

One afternoon I set out earlier than usual, partly because the heat had moderated. The drought continued, but there was a freshness in the air as if rain had fallen somewhere.

Memories are the only things we possess that do not change. Whatever is present is passing. You get a glimpse and it is gone, the day and its deeds.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

This road to Redfields station was sort of a biography of my girlhood. I had gone to school this way. I had visited and frolicked as a child over it. I had walked in the shadows of these trees as a very young girl with my first lover, Bruce Armstead. What had become of Bruce? No one had mentioned him to me since my return. And now that I had the mind to think of it, why had not Bonnie Armstead been to call on me? As girls we had been inseparable. After I had gone to New York we exchanged fervent letters for a time. Then Bonnie had failed to write. Years later father had written me that Mrs. Armstead was dead and that Angus was failing. The relations between father and Angus Armstead were peculiar. When they were sober they were friends, reserving toward each other a sort of remorseful consideration. But when they were not sober they became deadly enemies. And their periods of inebriation frequently coincided, for no better reason than that the one could not contend with the other in his rational, law-abiding senses. They could never agree about anything, whether it was a land line or a political issue, yet they were intermittently devoted friends.

I was thinking about Angus, how he looked the evening he had stumbled in to ask about father shortly after I came home, a feeble, doddering old man whose mind was failing, when I came in sight

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

of the Armstead place. It was the same old rambling farmhouse set back from the road between two spreading elm trees, and the very same red and white hollyhocks bloomed along the garden fence. Yet there was a difference—the difference that silence and stillness make. The door was closed. The curtains before the windows were drawn. No one was in sight. Nothing moved. There was not a sound in this house and garden, where I remembered so much motion and happy confusions. The way the house you live in looks sometimes may betray the secret which is hidden in your breast. What I mean is that I instinctively rejected the idea of entering the gate and knocking upon the closed door, which is what I should have been inclined to do but for the air of sad and secret silence which seemed to hang over it.

As I came in sight of Tinkham's store at Redfields the usual scene unfolded. Old Archie Winch stood in the doorway of his shop wearing his leather apron, shirtsleeves rolled up, face red and perspiring, cooling himself after a bout with his forge and anvil. Two or three disreputable-looking cars of no recognized motor ancestry, some barefoot boys pitching horseshoes, groups of farmers lounging in the shade of every doorway, and over all the puffing of the gasoline engine in the grist mill.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Two men seated opposite one another were playing checkers on the porch of Tinkham's store. Two others sat on the opposite side of the door, discussing the relative values of cowpeas.

One was saying as I came upon the porch: "I always plant the whip o' will pea!"

Then there was merely a shifting of bodies and a scraping of feet as they wished me good evening, and one of the men looked up from his game of checkers to ask me how was Kedic McPherson to-day? It appeared that he was never regarded as merely a father. He was very old, but no one called him "Old Man McPherson." Recently he had drifted into the past of the minds of his neighbors. They were beginning to refer to him biographically, but he still was known by his full name and would be long after he passed from this earth.

Through the open door I could see Mr. Tinkham—in the background as usual, moving with a sort of Herculean deliberation among the heavier groceries in the rear of the store. And I could see Mrs. Tinkham in the foreground, also as usual, puttering behind the notion counter.

Tinkham had somehow acquired the title of "Mister." I never knew why, but he was regarded as far back as I could remember as a dangerous man. This may have accounted for the politeness of his



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

title. He was always silent and always making a noise moving heavy things that thumped and resounded, such as boxes and barrels. His face was very lean and brown. His mouth was puckered to a point. He "used" tobacco and showed that he did. But if a history should be written of McPherson County, next to father he would probably be the most prominent man in it. He could lead a mob or disperse one. He was always the silent man who got there first and faced the emergency, whatever it was.

Mrs. Tinkham was quite the reverse. She was garrulous. She published all the news there was. She might have made a fortune with a scandal syndicate. She belonged brazenly to that class of women whose consciousness of being thoroughly respectable and virtuous inspires them to speak quickly and authoritatively about the lack of these qualities in others. She was a large blond woman who looked doubtful and was not. She wore a wig—the same one since I could first remember her. It was now merely the ravelings of a wig—the hair of it three shades lighter than her own. But under no circumstances would she be seen without this absurd thing on her head. That sickly fuzz of yellow hair represented some earlier blandishing sense she had of herself and had never yielded, probably because she was so constantly in the public eye.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Come in, Nancy!" she cried, glancing up as my shadow darkened the doorway.

"How nice and cool you look," she said when I had found my usual seat in the chair at the end of the counter.

I was wearing an organdie frock, pale gray, flowered over with ragged robins of every hue these cheerful little vagrants of the sun make when they bloom. Two pink rosebuds dropped from my garden hat on either side, and the ends of the narrow black velvet ribbon tied round the crown hung down briefly behind.

Mrs. Tinkham said she had heard that Kedic McPherson had had a backset.

I replied that he continued to improve slowly.

"You must wait for the mail to-day. The train is an hour late," she informed me.

"It is pleasant to rest after the walk from Redfields house," I answered.

"I reckon you are glad to be back home again," she went on.

She was laying bolts of cloth on the shelves—with her back turned to me—so that I could not see her face, but I felt it—the avid curiosity. And I detected a note in her voice which implied a doubt of my gladness, but I told her "Oh, yes."

"It looks like rain," she announced.

This was her habit—to skip nimbly from one topic

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

to another. I suppose it was because she did so many different things with her hands while she was talking.

“Yes, it does!” rumbled a voice from the rear, where only the broad bowed back of Mr. Tinkham was visible behind a barricade of sacks of flour.

Mrs. Tinkham flirted round and regarded this back with a spark in her eye. She was surprised. So was I. The male Tinkham rarely ever contributed his opinion to the common fund of opinions. I was persuaded that only a strong conviction caused him to do so now. I experienced a lively hope at once that we really might be going to have rain.

But Mrs. Tinkham would not have it so. She never agreed with her husband.

“All signs fail in a drought!” she retorted.

She came and sat in the remaining chair between the counter and the window.

“I reckon you heard about the fight between Judge Tanksley and Brother Bangs yesterday,” she began.

No, I had not heard. Why had they fought?

“Bangs is the pastor of the Methodist church at Cameron, you know. Sunday morning he preached his annual sermon on temperance. Tanksley is a Baptist, and I reckon he didn’t know that under Methodist law every pastor must preach at least one sermon a year on infant baptism and one on tem-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

perance. Judge Tanksley may have been worked up from the start, feeling that it was his business to charge the jury if there was a violation of the prohibition law, not Bangs' business, which was just to preach the gospel. Anyhow, when Brother Bangs went so far as to say in the course of his sermon that it wasn't only the unruly among us who were drinking whisky, he said there were public servants in McPherson County, sworn to enforce the law who were not above suspicion. And he clinched that by slamming his fist on the pulpit board and shouting in a loud voice that he, even he, had smelled liquor on the breath of a judge!"

She left me in suspense at this point while she went back and sold Mrs. Winch five yards of gingham.

Meanwhile, I could still hear old man Tom Skelton praising the "whip o' will pea."

"It makes more hay than the common cowpea," he asserted.

His companion would not dispute this.

"Now, you take the whip o' will pea in a drought like this, what does she do?"

He waited. The other man would not even question the gender of this great pea.

"Why, she goes on perducin', making hay and peas, when all other peas jest grunts and gives up!" he announced triumphantly.



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I inferred that the continued silence of his companion indicated that he was guilty of nourishing some other variety of pea on his land.

“If you’d try the whip o’ will pea, Jones—”

I did not hear how completely Jones would in that case be forever divorced from all other peas, because Mrs. Tinkham returned and began, much as any other author does, where she left off.

“Well, Judge Tanksley was sitting so near the front the pounding of Bangs’ fist on the book board jarred him. But he couldn’t do a thing. He dassent even get up and walk out, with every eye in the congregation resting on him.” She let out a chuckle of appreciation at this fine description, and went on:

“The next day—that was yesterday—he met Brother Bangs on the street opposite the post office in Cameron, and he asked Bangs what he meant by what he said about smelling liquor on a judge’s breath. Bangs told him he meant what he said. Tanksley wanted to know which judge.

“Then the preacher bends forward, brings his nose within two inches of Tanksley’s whiskers, and works his nose most offensively, making a sniffing sound, and he says as bold as brass, ‘I might have referred to you and told the truth.’

“Then they went at it so quickly that them that saw the fight can’t swear which one struck the first blow. But it took two men to pull Bangs off the

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

judge," she concluded hurriedly, as if she had suddenly lost interest in this story.

I asked if cases had been made against the combatants, but she did not answer. She was listening intently to a conversation going on outside the window.

The "men" lay piled in the middle of the checkerboard. The game was finished, and the players were now leaning close together, talking in undertones.

"He has joined."

"Just suits Bruce Armstead. Got a bold face, but must always have a cloak to hide his meanness. Now he's got a sheet!"

"Wonder if the old man knows?"

"Angus has lost his grip. He's getting old; mind's going."

"I look for something to happen before long."

Their voices dropped to a whisper. I could not be sure, but I thought I heard the name of Manson, as if this was a dark and dangerous name.

I glanced again at Mrs. Tinkham. She was listening, her head cocked to one side with that high, absent look women have when their ears are busy.

The two men stood up and moved off as if they were conscious of this eavesdropping presence and had deeper confidences to exchange.

"It seems strange how the same things happen after every war," Mrs. Tinkham remarked, follow-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

ing them with her eye across the road to Winch's shop.

"Yes?" I answered inquiringly.

"The Ku-Klux Klans have started up again," she answered.

"Ku-Klux?" I repeated.

She nodded her head ominously.

"Last Saturday night more than a hundred of them rode past this store. Tinkham don't like it. He says it's a hint when they ride through a community that there is somebody in it that ought not to be in it. But I told him they were on their way to Cameron. They paraded there that night. Then they went to the courthouse, took off those awful white sheets with black skull and bones sewed on them, flung 'em over all the benches, and set around eating ice cream. They eat all the ice cream there was in town. Then they wrapped up in their sheets and disappeared, riding like the wind. Sounds foolish, don't it?"

"And dangerous," I added, my mind suddenly busy trying to interpret the conversation we had overheard.

Then Mrs. Tinkham asked me if I had seen Bonnie Armstead since my return to Redfields.

I told her that I had not. I began again to think of Bonnie. She was a little slim thing—with pale blue eyes ten years ago—not pretty, not smart, but

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

engaging in a wistful sort of way. Strange how completely she had passed out of my mind.

"I should have thought Bonnie would have been married long ago," I said.

"No, she is not married," Mrs. Tinkham answered, after a significant pause. Her manner implied that there could be no possible association in her mind between Bonnie and matrimony.

"She was very attractive," I ventured.

Mrs. Tinkham looked the other way, meaning, it seemed, that she preferred to change the subject.

"She used to have a great many love affairs. She was very popular," I insisted.

Mrs. Tinkham remained as she was, averted and silent, an attitude of fearful charity.

Sometimes, and anywhere, such a silence may follow when the name of some woman is called, as if this name suddenly began to fall through this silence like a stone accidentally cast over the brink of a dark and bottomless abyss.

I was still staring at Mrs. Tinkham and listening into this awful silence when she turned at the sound of a step outside, glanced through the window and whispered:

"There she comes now!"

I had only time to observe the lightning change in my companion. She became the incarnation of malignant middle-aged virtue. The features in her fat



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

face seemed to sharpen, as if every one of these features became a two-edged sword, drawn and ready to strike.

The figure of a girl appeared in the doorway. She halted there dismayed, not by the coldness of Mrs. Tinkham's store—she had probably grown callous to that—but apparently it was at the sight of me. Her eyes met mine. She swayed a little, braced herself with one hand against the door, and stood for an instant undecided. Then she advanced timidly, not toward us, but indefinitely, as if her feet had no instructions about which way to go.

She was distinctly a girl still, as if her years had not matured her so much as they had damaged her youth, drawn dark circles beneath her childish eyes, blurred the lines of her face, without hardening it, changed the lips until the mouth was a pale confession of weakness and defeat.

She wore a dress of some light material, not fresh, and not becoming to her. One felt that only a blaze of color could have brought her out, the woman she was now. Still she clung dutifully to this plain, blue-gray frock, as if she must try to look modest and virtuous.

“Good afternoon, Mrs. Tinkham,” she said, not, I understood, by way of omitting me, but with that sad permission one woman sometimes gives another

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

woman to choose whether she will, or will not recognize her.

"Good evening, Bonnie," Mrs. Tinkham returned indifferently.

There are women who have a "to let" look on their faces, very different from the gracious giving animation good women have. It is the advertisement of vacancy and hopelessness, more poignant than any poverty.

I was stricken by the piteousness of this expression in Bonnie Armstead's eyes as she stood that first moment perfectly still, waiting for something hideous that might be going to happen to her because I was there and could do it.

"Bonnie Armstead!" I exclaimed, rising and hurrying to take both her hands in mine.

I saw her wonder if I meant to kiss her, not wishing that I should.

"I am so glad to see you again," I cried.

She said she was glad I had come home, and how was Mr. McPherson?

I told her father was improving. Why had she not been over to see me?

She murmured some evasive answer about never going anywhere.

Then she moved away, as if the length and breadth of all things lay between us.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Has the mail come?" she asked, addressing Mrs. Tinkham.

"No, it is late," was the reply.

Bonnie cast her eye about flutteringly, holding one hand close to her side. She seemed to drift aimlessly past the letter box of the post office on her way out.

"Did you see that?" Mrs. Tinkham whispered as she disappeared through the door.

I had seen, but I answered, "No, what?"

"She comes in here every day for the mail and she never gets any. But every day she sidles by that box and drops a letter into it—as if I should not know her handwriting when I sort the mail, and the one to whom she sends these letters! If post-masters told all they knew—"

She did not finish this ominous sentence. The long, hoarse shriek of a locomotive sounded in the distance. This was the fast express. It did not stop at Redfields. The mail pouch was flung off and another, suspended from a hook beside the track, was snatched into the mail car as the train passed.

Mrs. Tinkham leaped into frenzied activity. She flew across the floor into the door of the post office, emerging at once dragging the mail pouch after her.

"Hurry, Tinkham!" she shrieked. "You'll barely have time to reach the station."

Mr. Tinkham did not hurry. Once each day of his life he passed through this scene with his wife

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

and he passed leisurely. He slung the bag over his shoulder now and went out as usual with his long slow stride.

"I declare, men are aggravating," she grumbled. "Tinkham ain't lazy. He's just slow. He won't hurry, though he knows if he fails to get the mail off, somebody will report him and he'll lose his place, which pays fifty dollars a month; and he can't afford to lose that!"

There was a roar and another blast from the engine as the express shot by, leaving behind a long, rolling cloud of dust. Presently Mr. Tinkham emerged from this dust with the mail bag slung from his shoulder.

"He made it!" she said, and subsided into her chair with a sigh of relief.

While we were waiting for the mail to be sorted and put up, the people began to gather outside and in the doorway.

I heard the creaking of buggy wheels and saw through the window the legs and hanging head of an old sorrel horse.

"That's old Tom Carpenter making his rounds. I reckon you remember him," Mrs. Tinkham said.

I did, and even the horse.

"He's down and out now; lives with one of his sons. He ain't just right," she said, tapping her forehead. "He believes the world is going to be



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

destroyed by vermin. Gives a body the creeps to hear him talk. He rides up and down the road all day long. When he passes anybody he wants to stop and tell 'em about how fast bugs and worms are multiplying. Every time he gets to a house he stops at the gate and waits for somebody to come out so he can warn them. If nobody comes he drives on. But he never gets out of his buggy; just sets up there, bent, with his head turned sidewise, looking mournful and half scared."

I could hear a drooling old voice now outside.

"What did I tell you," he was saying, "the boll weevil is eating up all the cotton and the army worm is eating up all the corn."

The men began to tease and hector him.

"When is it going to rain, Uncle Tom?" some one called out.

"I don't know," he returned, "but you watch what I tell you. It's the worms and bugs that will turn everything back to nothin'. Every time a tree falls it's the bore worms that bring it down. Then they get to work on it and grind it up. Every time a man dies it's the worms that work him back to dust!" he chanted.

"Where have you been to-day?" another interrupted.

"I been settin' over in the road through Black

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Manson's cornfield. It's the only place I could find where there ain't no vermin eatin' the crops!"

He went on with his complaint, but at this point his audience deserted him. They began to discuss Black Manson's crops.

There were no weevils in his cotton, I heard one man say, and no worms in his corn. The army worm had made its appearance in McPherson County and whole fields of corn had been destroyed.

"What I can't understand is that his crops ain't suffering from the drought," some one said. "He'll make a full crop of corn."

"He planted it a month after we finished planting. It's young and tender. 'Tain't too late for the army worm to get it yet," a voice put in with unconscious hopefulness.

"Is it true, what they are saying about Manson's corn?" I asked, turning to Mrs. Tinkham.

She nodded her head as if she imparted mysterious information.

"If it were not for the cane growing so tall on the banks of the river you could see his corn from Redfield house. It's the finest I've ever seen in those bottoms."

Ten minutes later I was walking slowly along the road, with Oliver's letter thrust into the belt of my dress. As usual it was a masterpiece of love

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

making, delicate and sensuous. He wanted me very much. It had come to this, that he could not live without me. When would I return to New York? He had noticed that I did not mention coming back. I might expect him at Redfields any day now. He must see me, and so on and so forth. Besides, he wanted to see Redfields. He had "always liked the country."

He would like "the country," I thought, as one likes a cold bath. It is exhilarating to plunge into one, and a relief to get out of one. He belonged essentially to the apartment-house temperature of New York life. His mind belonged to bright channels no wider than Broadway. I doubt if he could function here. I could imagine one of Oliver's pale thoughts reverberating against this distant horizon, and there would be no other audience. It was different from the tintinnabulations of this idea round a circle of familiar spirits where each man and each woman gave it the lick of a laugh or the smack of a comment, as children toss a ball. I doubted if even Oliver could love me here. The frame means much to the picture. In New York I had been very prettily framed. Now I had been torn from it and rolled up into a heavy silence.

## CHAPTER VI

I had come by this time to a place where the road divided. One way of it lay straight before me to Redfields house. The other led through the bottoms across the bridge over the river. I recalled what I had heard about Black Manson's corn. I had a sort of vindictive curiosity about this corn. I doubt if there was any other thought above the surface of my mind.

I stood considering whether I should take this roundabout way home. Then I chose the road across the bridge, walking briskly lest I should be late getting home to father, whom I had left in the care of old Ike, the yard man.

Men make their own destinies. There is some logic in the way they win or fail in the order of things according to their works. But I know of nothing more fearsome than the trivial things upon which the lives of women turn, not upon what they do or think, but a wind that closes the shutter just as the man passes whom she might have loved and married if the day had been calm and the shutter had remained open. It was not choosing the road which led to Black Manson's cornfield that day—doing that simply led to my works later on—but it was



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

the accident of having thrust Oliver's letter in the girdle of my frock which sealed my fate as a woman.

There was a field of millet on the land above our corn. Now as I approached I perceived that the millet was not there! I stood amazed, wondering what had become of it. On the previous day I had observed it showing against the fallow corn from the windows of Redfields house like a long, narrow, green band.

Suddenly I recalled what I had heard at the post office about the appearance of the army worm and I understood what had happened. This army had levied upon the millet for its maintenance. It flashed across my mind that old Carpenter might not be so far wrong. It required more to feed an army of worms than a regiment of soldiers if this was a sample of what they could consume in two days. I was relieved when I reached that part of the road which led through the corn to see that this had been spared. These worms only devour corn when it is young and tender and mine was past that stage. But what then, I wondered, had become of them? Not one was to be seen, only the markings of their passage in the dust. I knew, as every one does who has been born and bred on the land, that they never turn back but go on in their gluttonous march straight ahead until they disappear—probably into some other form of vermin life.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

From the agricultural point of view I certainly was an innocent woman at this time, but now a thought came to me as I stared down the road to where the river divided my cornfield from Black Manson's cornfield. I will not admit that this thought developed the wings of a wish, but it did take the form of a highly gratifying probability. I suppose, in time, one may forgive an enemy and become reasonably affable spiritually to any good that may befall him, but it takes time. At the present moment I had only time to recall that the bed of this river was practically dry in many places, and that these worms would not require pontoon bridges to cross into Manson's corn.

Nothing happened until I was within fifty yards of the bridge. Then I saw a curious bristling black-and-gold smear across the road. The dust dimmed it here, but as far as eye could reach down the rows of corn it brightened into a distinct line which was moving toward the river with a senseless, loathesome wriggle. I had overtaken the army worm in regular formation! Only the dry bed of the stream lay between them and Manson's corn, but I knew that they could never cross it. These worms cannot even crawl up the straight side of a deep furrow. But they constantly reproduce themselves into butterflies, which, in turn, change to worms in some farther field.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I thought that—merely thought it—and hoped I was not mistaken about this process of evolution as I took another look at the advance guard of vermin on the road which certainly would cross the bridge before dark. Then I lifted my skirts and started forward at a run on my tiptoes with sickening courage and landed on the bridge.

The sight that met my eyes beyond the cane on the other bank of the river was amazing: A forest of corn, stretching low along the stream, tall, deep green. From every stalk hung the silks of two or three ears; opulent, yellow silks just beginning to turn pink at the ends.

I was not so simple as to imagine that the difference between this corn and mine on the other side of the river was either a miracle or an accident. I knew very well that it was due to the way Manson had prepared his land and cultivated his crops. He had plowed deep and then subsoiled, so that the roots of his corn reached the moisture below even in this drought. It came to me suddenly what fabulous wealth there was in this land. The life in it was more precious than gold and so much easier to be had. It came up of itself from merely the sowing of seeds and grew into the richest harvests, provided one prepared it and planted it with care and—yes, affection! Father, I knew, had no such sense of the land. All his life he had been a vandal,

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

taking from it in his masterful way and giving nothing in return.

I had gone back across the bridge by this time to look again at the ravished fields of Redfields. The pale corn dying in its shallow furrows reproached me. I was some of that human life that had betrayed the land upon which it now was perishing.

I cannot say how long I stood there, but I know that I passed through some travail of mind and spirit which united me to this land as one takes a vow. The poverty of these desolate fields had now suddenly become my poverty, and dear to me. Father, lying upon his bed in that silent, upper chamber in Redfields house, was the desert symbol of what had happened to this land. He was a part of it. And I alone was the life of it. The debts, the incredible difficulties that faced me, were nothing to the antagonism I felt toward Black Manson. This was not enmity; it was rather the matching of some strange new force in me against the strength of this man and his cupidity. I no longer feared him. I was exalted, immensely superior to him. I foreordained myself to the task of crushing him—it is a feminine word, crush! Providence, the weather, might or might not help; that made no difference. Manson should never own another foot of Redfields plantation!



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

This resolution was directly to the point, for I had learned, through Doctor Fosberry, that when Black Manson bought the Big Woods two years before this time he had also purchased the mortgage father had previously made to cover a relatively small loan which he had obtained from the bank. This loan would fall due in another year.

But I did not depress myself now with the question of how I should raise this money. I felt suddenly entirely capable of doing so. It was, you may say, a sublime feat of the imagination or a foolish one. The effect was the same in either case. It restored me to my birthright.

It is one thing to be distinguished for having written a book or even a dozen books. I now had some experience with the levity of such fame—but it is a different thing to be within your own consciousness a great man or a great woman for having accomplished something natural and honorable in the eternal order of things. Looking back now, I know that out of the anguished ecstasy of that hour I became potentially a great woman. I felt like a promise made to this land. Tears filled my eyes. I saw the hills through these tears remember me. I felt the breath of standing trees blow across my face.

At this moment the tread of a heavy foot sounded on the bridge behind me. I turned and beheld Black Manson.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I suppose the exaltation I had just experienced was something similar to "conversion," which is always spiritual but not always religious. Now, beneath the cool darkness of this man's eyes, I became once more merely the woman of myself, flushed with embarrassment, conscious of the tears on my cheeks. The sensation was decidedly one of deflation.



## PART THREE

### CHAPTER VII

Manson halted so abruptly that his long slatternly frame swung forward for the next step before he steadied himself and stood regarding me as if I were an announcement that he was not expecting.

One may receive impressions so hurriedly and under conditions so confusing that they are like negatives which memory develops afterwards with perfect distinctness and considerable attention to details. At this moment I was conscious only of being embarrassed, of having been detected in the very act of planning enmity and adversity to this man. But later when I recalled this scene I realized that I had been a sort of motion-picture camera on my end of the bridge taking a whole reel of my own impressions of Black Manson.

It is the instinct of retaliation in all of us when we have suffered some sensation diminishing to our pride to reach out with the sword of a thought and cut off enough cubits from the stature of the offending party to even matters up. Many a great



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

man has had his head bitten off by another kind of man without suspecting his decapitation or the bitter satisfaction it afforded the other fellow. Even so, in this brief moment during which we stood mutually detecting each other, I dealt Manson several critical blows. In the first place, I perceived that he was not the tremendous personality he appeared to be on that night a month since when he came striding toward me across the fallen shadows on Redfields lawn. Here in the daylight he lacked the ancient and mysterious attributes with which my imagination had invested him. He was modern and apparent. He had evidently submitted to civilization, which somehow one feels is far inferior to the atmosphere created in Genesis by the men who moved so majestically and simply through this period that their whole tremendous lives might be recorded in one brief verse of Scriptures. This was no dusty young Enoch! This was a well-groomed man in the coarse garb of a laborer. He was so recently shaved that the skin of his face was still smoothly pink from the razor. The dew of a bath glistened on his well-brushed hair. His great hands were tanned and bearded, but the finger nails glistened white and as evenly filed as if he had just returned from the manicurist.

I took all this in at a glance and had only time to decide that no man born and bred to the land

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

could have acquired habits of furbishing himself up merely to walk in his fields on a week day.

"Good afternoon," he said.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Manson," I returned.

"Were you coming or going?" he asked in a tone which implied that he would conduct himself accordingly.

"Coming," I answered, obliged to drop my eyes, not because this was a lie, but because I was a woman, a fact clearly but coolly defined in his gaze.

It always imparts feelings of personal defeat to be and to know that you never can be anything but a woman in the eyes of a man no matter what you may do over and beyond being one. I longed to turn my back upon him, walk calmly and majestically away as we do from something elementally offensive. What I really did was to advance.

"I wanted to see your corn," I explained nonchalantly.

He hesitated, then turned back with me, moved, I was sure, by no politeness, but by his vanity as a husbandman.

"It is very fine," I said, surveying this field again.

"Yes," he agreed, looking back over the bridge as if now he might continue his journey.

But I sat down on the low stone buttress of the bridge like a guest who is determined to be welcome.

By that serpent of divination which is sometimes

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

what a woman's mind is I was certain that he did not know the army worm was already in Redfields bottom; much less did he suspect that they would be over this bridge before sundown—not all of them, but enough I reckoned to produce a powerful military nation of worms in his corn before the dawn of another day.

We may be the sons of God, as it is written. I do not know. But nothing is said anywhere about the daughters of God. I have sometimes feared in my sadder moments that women are post-Scriptural. In any case the best of us do often work at vengeance with the loyalty of saints even while we figure in all the sweet fairness of daughters. I was determined that Black Manson should not cross this bridge. I had become a friendly neutral to that wriggling army in the dust back there.

"You have escaped the army worm," I said in an affirmative tone, wishing to make sure of his ignorance.

"Yes, we both have," he agreed.

"My corn is too tough now to be damaged by them."

"Well, they would make short work of mine at this stage if they were here, but they are not," he answered serenely.

"You have only to fear a flood now," I suggested.

"After a protracted drought, yes," he admitted.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"I have seen these bottoms covered with water from hills to hills in August," I remarked as if this were merely a memory, not a hope.

"But the flood must begin on your side," he returned, stretching a long arm and pointing to a sharp bend in the river which was in fact a sort of dam that must throw the water on my land first.

"I count on that and the deep channel of the river between us to break the force of a flood if it comes," he explained coolly.

I felt better about counting on the worms in view of this frank admission.

He was standing with his back to me, his head lifted pridefully, still regarding his corn.

"Ever think of this, that the word 'corn' is always used to denote plenty in the Scriptures?" he asked without so much as a glance in my direction.

I made no reply. A woman never likes the back of a man, especially when he is speaking to her. We all feel like magnets to the masculine eye. It is our nature to be seen when we are present. Seated there behind him in all the pinkness and whiteness of myself, with my organdie skirts spread, my nice feet neatly crossed, and garnished with the rosebuds drooping from the broad brim of my hat, I was simply the blank cartridge of femininity. Flushed and unintelligibly angry I shot the invective of a look at his back. I was this opulent and



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

plentiful thing, a woman in the prime of her loveliness; but he made me feel like one of Joseph's elder brethren earlier in the famine season which finally drove all these brethren down into Egypt to beg for corn. I resolved never to beg, borrow or buy corn from Black Manson. All this because of his back, not on account of his boastful Scriptural reference. We do not know how vain we are until our vanity has been wounded.

Apparently he did not miss my part of the conversation which was not being said. He began to stride back and forth, speaking as people do who have the time and silence in which to think. I was obliged to listen, although I doubt if my inattention would have mattered. My impression was that this might be a habit with him and that now he was probably repeating what he had already frequently said to himself as an appreciative audience.

"It is not enough to own land. That may mean merely enslaving land," he was saying. "The chief thing is to learn the mind and will of the soil. Otherwise you are simply a foreigner. We concoct fertilizers because we do not study the psychology of the land. It has its varying talents and temperament developed far more consistently than we have. Why not?" he demanded, halting to put this question squarely to me. "We are the products from it no less than this corn?"

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I thought this was the crudest creed of pantheism I had ever heard, but I did not say so. I was not at the moment on speaking terms with him. I remained the prim portrait of myself. I shot past him with a thought about how this scene would end. I could not remain here guarding this bridge. If I withdrew he would surely cross it and discover that vermin army bent upon devouring his corn. He was capable of destroying the bridge to check their advance.

“The land, no less than man, is subject to environment. It develops character and qualities according to conditions, as we do,” he was saying.

“You see that sloping hill?” he went on, waving his hand at a wide cottonfield above the corn.

I stared at it, omitting him in the passing of my eye.

“Originally the soil was the same as this,” thrusting the toe of his shoe in the rich black dust. “On the level it would have produced the same kind of crops. But it is not on the level. Therefore its reaction to the sun and the seasons is different—so different that it will not produce good corn any more than these bottoms will make good cotton. The soil on that hill is now feminine, volatile, whereas this below is heavy and strong, more life and substance in it,” he concluded.

I did not relish having my gender applied to the

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

flimsy, ruffle-producing earth of a washed-down cottonfield. Besides I was bored, as one always is when somebody discusses any subject in a manner alien or indifferent to one's own personal presence. I decided that Manson's egotism surpassed Oliver Winchell's powers of negation. The difference was that in the bottomless pit of his innocuous desuetude Oliver was always aware of me. He clung to me as a drowning man clings by his eyes to a fair and stately soil on the bright horizon. This may be the reason why so many women marry men far inferior to them. These men, conscious of their weakness, think with a keener, despairing admiration of us. It is the strongest appeal not only to our vanity but to our compassion.

Black Manson was no such man. He would never be to any woman the eloquent, faint-hearted lover Oliver was to me. I doubted if even his relations to Providence were prayerful. Figuratively speaking, he was the kind of man who might refer to God as his biographer, not his Creator. Such men may be great characters, but they are dull. You never invite one of them to a dinner party except for the honor of showing yourself as one of the small letters in the human alphabet who may come next to this highly embossed Capital at your own table. They lack or they have lost the touching sprightliness, that gentle eloquence of comrade-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

ship. First and last I had known many such men in New York, celebrated persons who were offensively unconscious of being mere men.

I will not claim that I thought so clearly at the time, but I remember looking at Manson standing a short distance from me with his hands folded behind him, ogling his corn as if this corn was ten thousand personal pronouns of himself. And I distinctly remember making up my mind there behind his magnificent back never to marry him. Most men would be astonished to learn how many women have refused them in the same manner. It is not necessary to propose marriage in order to be rejected by a woman. She can do it with every kind of satisfaction, even if you scarcely know her and never entertained the remotest idea of flattering her with your attentions.

The road across the bridge forked above Manson's cornfield. One way led directly to his cabin, the other was from this point the shorter way to Redfields station. I thought of that now as a convenient exit from this situation. The afternoon was drifting brightly towards sundown, but the sky had been overcast in the southwest since noon and the muttering thunder rumbled nearer. I slipped from the buttress of the bridge, fluffed my skirts and assumed an active expression.

"We may be going to have rain at last," I said.



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"They are getting a flood of it in the hills now," he answered.

"Why do you think so? Neither clouds nor thunder mean anything in this drought," I answered.

"But that does," he said, indicating the channel of the river.

I stared, astonished at a slow, slimy stream of yellow water slipping past.

"When did it begin?" I exclaimed. "There was only a green pool here a while ago."

"Just begun—by the drift it is bringing down," he answered.

"But it is rising," I said, as the water began to come in waves which did not fall.

"May be a roaring flood in a few minutes," he said.

He meant to stay there, I inferred, to watch the river rise.

"You were on your way to Tinkham's store just now, weren't you?" I asked after a pause.

"Yes," he answered absently, with his eyes still on the rising water.

"So am I," I said.

He did not hear this invitation.

"We may as well go along together," I suggested, casting a look along the way I meant to go.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

He faced about and gave me a look. For the first time, he really saw me; forgot the corn and the flowing river, I mean, and put his mind on me. His gaze was not interrogative but studious, as a man's eye is sometimes when he has had practice reading the foreign language in which every woman is written. I may have flushed slightly, not knowing which lexicon he might be using.

We started off on this road in the deep shadows of the corn. I was no longer the dangerous person I had been the moment before. What I planned had been accomplished. I felt amiable and innocent, secretly amused, conscious of my companion's confused attention. The sun was still shining low in the west. The summer air was filled with the myriad sounds Nature makes when she sings to herself. I bent to pick a wild primrose and lingered long enough to draw it carelessly through the lace on my breast. Meanwhile I talked to his silence. I was feeling more nearly myself than I had at any time since my return to Redfields. Personally speaking, man had always been my element. I asked him if he had ever been interested in the opera. He said no. He liked simple music, but when it became complex or magnificent it disturbed him. I mentioned a popular novel. Had he seen this book? No, he did not read fiction.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"It is a waste of time," he said.

"So is life then, for that is the great fiction," I shot back with a laugh.

I thought he liked the laugh but not what I had said. I came a furlong nearer with my next sally.

"Don't you find life dull on the farm after living in cities?" I asked innocently.

"Why do you think I have lived in cities?" he evaded.

"I do not think; I know that you have," I retorted, smiling not at him but straight ahead.

"I was born on a farm"—after a pause meaning that this was enough said.

But I went on talking as you shout to timid people on the shore to come in if the water is fine. It was mere feminine splashing done to convict him of his dullness.

We had come half the distance through the corn when I realized that I no longer held his attention and that unconsciously I had quickened my pace to keep step with him because he was walking now with a long, swift stride, his eyes wide with excitement.

Then we both halted, held by a strange prescience of danger.

Never before have I known what perfect silence and stillness meant. Literally there were no sounds; not a cricket chirruped, not a leaf stirred.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

The rustling corn stood still. The very trees seemed to stand and listen. It was as if the whole of Nature held her breath and waited.

I was afraid to look behind me—it was like that. But I saw Manson crouch, with his eyes lifted as if something horrible was about to pass over us.

Toward the south the whole heavens were in a turmoil. Clouds rolled above clouds, like huge black curtains streaked with flames blown by a terrific wind far over our heads. At the same moment a curious black spindle appeared in the northwest, whirling with incredible velocity. The sun changed to a smoking ball of fire. For one instant the Big Woods, these fields about us, were enveloped in a strange emerald light. Then darkness, filled with a terrific roar, as if presently all the stars in the elements would be passing by in this blue darkness. Yet not a leaf stirred, not a blade of corn. Manson changed to a gray shadow beside me. I clung to him and screamed.

I felt him lay hold of me, lift me bodily from the ground and fling me face downwards between the rows of corn. But not before I saw trees leap from the forest and spin like great brooms in a whirlwind above Big Woods.

Then it came with a deafening roar, the screaming, bellowing forest, terrible crashing sounds as if great things had fallen. And through it all keener



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

whistling sounds, as if little winds blew in reeds through this hurricane.

The corn lay down above me with the rending and splitting of every silken blade. I felt it struggling over me as if it were being sucked up by the roots. My own breath was drawn from me and the weight of the wind lay upon me.

I remember my death in this horror, and knew no more until I lay in a gentle rain, with Black Manson bending above me.

I had one look at him and closed my eyes. His clothes were dripping wet and torn to shreds. His face was streaked with mud. Blood flowed from a long wound across his forehead.

"It is all over," I heard him say.

"Yes, what killed us?" I whispered, only faintly astonished that our dust could still speak.

I felt very quiet and peaceful. Death is undoubtedly a great relief from responsibility. Ages seemed to pass before I heard him say:

"You are all right; only stunned."

I heard him and agreed in silence. I felt shriven, perfectly innocent, incapable of animosity or any of the purposes that animate us in life. I recall the sensation vividly because it is the only moment of unqualified peace I have ever known.

More ages passed. Then I felt him seize me roughly by the shoulders and shake me. My only

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

thought was that this was like him—to shake me. I should have preferred to die with Oliver! Oliver had a mind for being dead. He would have lain quietly like a gentleman in his dust!

“Cyclone!” came a shout close to my ear.

This fearful announcement restored me to my senses. I began to tremble violently. Tears flowed from beneath my eyelids.

“Good thing it missed us!”

“But it didn’t. It came over me. It remained there!” I sobbed.

“No, it passed a quarter of a mile away,” still shouting with his lips close to my ear.

“You only got a good thrashing under the corn. Saved your life, at that!”

I continued to sob, feeling the need of this relief.

“Come, let me help you up!” he insisted after a pause.

“Mr. Manson, please go away!” I moaned faintly.

“I can’t leave you here,” he answered gruffly.

I sat up immediately and gave him a look. What I meant was that no gentleman would use this tone of voice to a woman beaten down by a cyclone. It is very difficult to satisfy the senseless demand of mere feelings. I suppose I should have been still more indignant if he had taken me at my word and gone away. At the same time I suffered as much

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

from embarrassment as from shock and indignation. If some one sees you at your worst and you do not know it, this is an immense saving of your vanity. I had to face Manson bereaved of every charm as he drew me from this mud to my feet. My flimsy summer frock was a rag that clung to me despairingly. My hat was gone forever. My hair had become involved in this hurricane of wind and rain. It streamed over my shoulders, wet and wildly crinkled.

"We may be obliged to go round by Redfields station; I think the river is out of banks," he said.

"No, I must get home the nearest way," I answered, hurrying back towards the bridge.

"If we can," he put in, holding steadily to my arm.

"The road is elevated above the field; I can make it," I said.

I was thinking only of father, of what might have happened to Redfields house.

"The flood will not last long enough to damage anything. I doubt if it gets out much on my side," I heard him say.

He was thinking of his corn, which was down, the blades split to ribbons.

We were nearing the bridge. I could see the yellow water flowing across my land from the bend in the river. But as Manson had predicted earlier

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

in the afternoon, the deep channel here broke the force of the water. It did not reach twenty feet beyond the bank into his corn. I saw all this at a glance.

Then Manson halted, still holding to my arm. He made a sound, something between a growl and an imprecation. He stood a trifle bent, staring at what had seemed drift until we reached the edge of the water; in fact, it was a wriggling mass of worms. Every stick and leaf on the bosom of this flood was covered with them. Millions of them were crawling from the mud on to the bent stalks of corn.

I took what was meant to be a stolen glance at Manson and found myself in the full glare of his gaze. His eyes were filled with accusative amazement. They seemed to blow upon me like an icy wind out of the dark. I knew nothing of his history or previous condition at this time, but afterwards I remembered this look, imperative and contemptuous, with which he regarded me. It was the same expression, I imagine, with which a Wall Street bull might have regarded some little curb-cat speculator in the street below who by accident had momentarily messed up his market.

"You knew that they were over there!" he said, letting go my arm as if he expelled me from him.

So much had happened in the hour since I had wished this calamity upon him—merely wished it,



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

you understand—that it was with an effort that I recovered my cheerful sense of guilt in regard to these worms.

“Yes,” I admitted, lifting my chin at him.

“But when we were talking about the army worm a while ago you said they were not in these bottoms.”

“No, you said that; I merely permitted you to enjoy the conceit of your ignorance,” I retorted.

“But why? What were you expecting to gain?” he demanded in an even voice, as if the incident of the worms had passed and he was now interested in the curb-cat speculator in worms.

“Because this is not your land. It is mine! The Big Woods, all of it is mine,” I exclaimed, including the whole gray horizon in my sweeping gesture.

“You obtained it from a broken old man. You took advantage of his simplicity and his necessity. The price you paid was nothing compared with the value you received,” I cried.

“And you think you will get the remainder of Redfields,” I went on, “but you never shall have it!”

“Now you understand. I don’t care what happens to you or to your corn. It is really my corn!” I finished, accompanying this finish with a blazing look of wrathful contempt, feeling it emanate from me like proud curses.

His retort was silence and a glint, a faint crinkling

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

of the lines about his eyes. It was the amused look a man casts upon an angry woman.

I was still brave, but spent. Tears filled my eyes. I began to tremble violently.

"I think you had better hurry home now and put on some dry clothes," he remarked coolly after a pause. The implication was that this was much more important than what I had been saying.

There are ways and ways for a man to defeat a woman. Even if he does not take the trouble to do it, her own nature will do it. If I had not made the cut of a last look at him the tears might not have escaped and flowed down my cheeks like a contribution to him, and I should have been spared the lightning humor of his smile at my expense. As it was, in the glare of this grin I had to catch up my drenched skirts and step forward into the shallow water. This was deeper on the other side of the bridge, but I held myself valiantly, taking it with a fine stride. If you are in full retreat the best thing you can do is to assume the air of advancing in the other direction. It is possible then to appear victorious from the rear.

## CHAPTER VIII

A litter of boughs blown in the fierce wind covered the lawn about Redfields house. Two of the old-fashioned latticed blinds hung by one hinge from the windows on the north side. This was the extent of the damage done by the storm.

At the sound of my step in the hall Ike came shuffling down the stairs from father's room to meet me.

"My Lord, Miss Nancy, I have been skeert to death about you!" he exclaimed.

"How is father?" I asked breathlessly.

"He is all right. He was sleepin' sound when de haricane struck up here, and he wa'n't more'n wake good before hit was gone," he explained.

"Hit was the rain dat stirred him up. He ain't missed you yit, but he's worryin' about de flood in de bottoms," he went on, following me up the stairs.

"Whar was you when it hit you?" he wanted to know.

"I was looking at the corn in the bottoms," I answered briefly.

I sent him back to father while I changed. Then I went in there—to find him propped up on his pillows with a sharpened look on his old gray face.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Nancy," he greeted me thickly, "I'm sick."

"Yes, dear, but you are much better."

"It was the flood. I went down there in the bottoms a while ago. The hay shed and the cane mill are gone, washed away, and all the corn is down in the mud," he groaned.

He went on about this. The corn would rot in the mud before he could put the teams and wagons in there to get it out.

This, he explained to me, was how he had got the cold. He had been in the bottoms all day trying to save his corn.

Then I understood. This storm had freshened him. It had blown him, so to speak, out of the dim shadows of half-consciousness. But he had landed fifteen years back in time. The flood he was now discussing actually did come then, taking away the hay shed and the cane mill. And father had been laid by the heels in bed for weeks with pneumonia, due to exposure, when he had spent the freezing October days that followed trying to save his corn.

From this time forward he wandered about in his years like a tired old sheep. But by some magnificently protecting instinct he would not spend one day in his present life. He would be away upon the mountain of his past years, dragging the shadows of his deeds after him. He improved rapidly now. Presently he was on his feet and shortly



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

he was downstairs on the veranda. But he insisted upon wearing a piece of red flannel on his chest. And when there was a visitor he would show it, taking a long time to unbutton his shirt to prove that he had the thing on him. In no other way could he account for his feebleness. He was still recovering from that spell of pneumonia, he wanted you to know. He expected, however, to be well presently. This became a sort of deceit with him long after he yielded privately to invalidism, a way he had of keeping up his front to the neighbors.

The people who live next to the land suffer without knowing that they do from the awful monotony of life. They are not creative; they are only productive. They live in the midst of a great epic, and they have no imagination. A storm or a field of wheat never inspired a farmer to write a poem. What he thinks about is how much the storm has damaged his land or whether he will have good weather for the harvesting of his wheat. The land and the sky hold him in bondage. Nothing can happen to him except daylight and darkness. His only relaxation is the unconsciousness of sleep. Or the barking of a dog may awaken him and he gets a little quickening of his faculties merely by wondering who is passing in the night. Or he has the suspense of waiting for the weather to change. Or

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

he may get his hay in by the skin of his teeth before it does change. Or, he may take a tumor from his mule's neck and sell this mule for a good price before the growth returns. Such little diversions help, but they do not last. It is the monotony that lasts. While he is stepping this way and that to turn his little trick, the land is really his master and will require the same labor. His wife is cooking the same kind of supper for him that she always cooks, and he will have the same chipped plate from which to eat it. He may run amuck and change his scenes by getting drunk. And she must, when the hour of her travail comes. The weary mate of this man is always overworked. She may have more children than she can take care of, but the advent of a brand-new infant seems to refresh her. There is a pathetic glow about her, a look of poignant happiness in her faded eyes. It is terrible when you think about it—which she never does—and it gives one a fear of the awful mercilessness of Nature. She covers her processes with romanticism and every illusion. And all eyes are holden so that we see her works but never fear the cost of her methods until we are forced to pay for them. Even then, you understand, there is that look of poignant happiness in the eyes of mothers who pay and pay again and add constantly to the burden which finally ends with the end of their lives. No wonder faith in

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

immortal life is so much stronger next to the land than it is next to the templed ceilings of magnificent cathedrals in the cities. There worship is a sort of esthetic gratification of the spiritual faculties, but here faith in eternal life is the only refuge from the weather and poverty of this one.

The long drought added to the desperate dullness of life among the people round Redfields that summer. Nothing happened to change our thoughts from the one thought of the burning fields. Mrs. Tinkham was a sort of backhanded godsend during this period. She kept every little wisp of news stirring. She had practice and considerable skill for embellishing facts. And like most gossips she was charitable. I never knew her to say to a man's face what she would say to his back. She was that considerate of his feelings, even when she had no consideration for his reputation. She could not bear to see her victim wince when she told of some deed he had committed which was morally foreshortened. But she was known and feared for her tongue. The manner of all men to her was respectful and soothing. The manner of all women to her was coldly polite. The reason, I suppose, was that very few of them had a "past," while most men achieve one before they do anything else, poor souls.

So Mrs. Tinkham performed a double service that summer in her far from humble way. She acted as

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

a sharp human stimulant. We condemned her and craved her works. She always had something to tell about a neighbor that the rest of us wanted to know. At the same time she exercised quite without effort more moral influence than the law or the preachers in this community. When she overtook a man in a fault—and she was always fox hunting for everybody's swiftest, most private fault—she did not pray for him in her closet nor rebuke him in secret: she rewarded him openly for this transgression. She arrested not him but his character. She preferred the rumor against him, tried him and sentenced him according to her lights, which were very strong lights, morally speaking.

I do not think the art of the gossip receives due appreciation. It is marvelous. Mrs. Tinkham, for example, could relate a trivial incident about the most insignificant person in such a way as to excite and hold your interest. And she used no tricks of the dramatist to do it. She told her story and left you to draw your own picture of how he looked, which you instinctively did. The best writers of fiction never achieve so much. They work out a "speaking" likeness of the hero at the start. Mrs. Tinkham never did. She would begin with some such question as this:

"I suppose you heard about the meeting at Mount Pleasant last night?"



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

This was to catch your eye and your attention. And you would answer, regarding her hungrily, that you had not heard of this meeting.

“Well, old Davy Dyer—he’s a deacon, you know—invited all Christian people to meet him at the church at sundown yesterday afternoon to pray for rain. And he wanted every man and woman of ’em to bring his umbrella as an ‘act of faith.’ ”

“Did they go?” I asked.

“Yes, quite a sprinkling went.”

“Did they take their umbrellas?”

“Well, now that’s right smart to ask, you know. If it didn’t rain the joke would be on them. I don’t know about the Almighty, but folks will laugh if you make a fool of yourself. No, nobody didn’t take one but old Davy. He did—that old pot-bellied one he’s been carrying for years.”

“And nothing happened?”

“It didn’t rain. You know what a dry hot night last night was. But they say the old man fairly shook the rafters with his prayers. And finally Polly Carpenter got happy and shouted. That’s all that happened.”

But I could see old David, bent, with his long white whiskers, his pale blue eyes, his little apostrophe nose, going along the road to this church with his pot-bellied umbrella. I could see the curious crowd gathering. It was now many a year since

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I had heard any but the most studied and finished praying in a church, but I could see this old bleached rain crow of a man leading in prayer, his face the one face to be seen in the dim light of the smoking lamps, every other head bowed. I could hear old David's voice growing louder until it became a wail for help. I could hear the groaning amens, the sniffling of the women, see the wide eyes of some young child sitting beside its mother perfectly still, listening, watching this performance until its nerves broke beneath the thunder of old David's invocations. Then the joining of the child's terrified crying with the hoarse notes of David's prayer. And finally the little bobbing gray head of Mrs. Carpenter, her bony hands raised, she smacking them together and murmuring in a whisper just below this silence, "Oh, blessed Jesus!" I remembered how gently and discreetly she used to shout when I was a girl sitting somewhere in this church during a revival.

I was thinking about that and picturing to myself how these people must have looked coming out of the dark church into the dust-dry night after they had prayed, David with his umbrella, the others carrying no such testimonial of their faith. With them it was an experiment; with him it was a challenge to the God of all the heavens humbly made, but a challenge nevertheless. I could see them filing off this way and that through the moon-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

lit night to their homes, and I could see David hoist his hat, cock his head to one side and cast a long look at the cool, clear sky, where no cloud hid a single star, then start off feebly down the hill, bent by the years of immortal faith in his Lord. I could almost hear the tinkle of a bell, sounding sweet and faint as this old bellwether saint disappeared in the darkness.

I was thinking in a confused way along these lines, being unused to spiritual reflections, when Mrs. Tinkham came and sat down beside me.

"I reckon you heard about Milly Harper," she said.

I had not heard. She told me. Milly was Thad Harper's wife. They had been married nine years. In that time Milly had become the mother of six children, and Thad had paid for his farm. At first Milly was a pretty, perky little thing; she worked hard, went to church on Sunday and visited some. Then she quit going about, stayed at home with the children and worked harder. Finally you never saw Milly—only Thad and the children.

"We heard that her health was bad," Mrs. Tinkham went on. "That was during this last winter. But she picked up in the spring, helped Thad put his crop in. She held out until this drought set in. Then it seems she got queer, just queer at first, you

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

understand. Not so as you'd notice it, she doing her work as usual.

"Then one day last week Mrs. Winch passed the Harper place and saw all the little Harper kids sitting out by the roadside, bunched up like a flock of lambs in a cold east wind, though it was a broiling hot day. They were just sitting there perfectly still, the way children do when they are listening or afraid or somebody is dead in the house.

" 'How is your ma?' Mrs. Winch asked 'em.

"They kept their eyes on her and didn't say a word.

"The next day, last Tuesday, we heard Milly had lost her mind. She got the idea that the Lord was calling her to come home and bring the children with her. That's the way it affected her."

Mrs. Tinkham paused and regarded me with a sidelong look, as if her mind was sneaking up on something it was not lawful to get, and she had it, you may say, by the tail feathers.

"Ain't it strange," she began, speaking in a sort of surreptitious tone, "how we hear so much about the voice of God calling us, and every preacher urging us to listen to this voice and obey, but just let one of us like poor Milly actually hear it and want to obey! The ordinary calls a jury. She is adjudged insane and they clap her into the asylum!"



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I ain't saying a word against the voice, you understand, but I say you'd better not believe it with your ears, nor get too religious, because if you do it means you are crazy. Now, how is that?"

I told her I did not know. I thought it wiser not to become involved with Mrs. Tinkham in regard to the spiritual ear and the spiritual sense.

"Well, do you want to know what I think? I think Thad Harper worked his wife down to her last hope, which was faith in the Lord. She got to be a habit he had of thrift and industry. And she's the second woman in three years to be sent from this neighborhood to the asylum for the same reason. The other one was Mrs. Sutton. She stood it for over thirty years. Her children were grown and married off. And Sutton was a rich man, but he let her go on as she'd started when they were young and poor. She would get up at three o'clock in the morning and get breakfast, so she'd have time to do all she had to do. Finally she wouldn't go to bed at all. Worked all night. Then they sent her to the asylum! Don't talk to me about men!" she added, fanning herself fiercely.

Then she stood up; one might say she blazed up. She clinched her fist, held it high over her head as if she hoped her heavenly Father would bear witness to this fist. She roved the store with eyes spitting sparks.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“And,” she exclaimed, “I would not marry another one of them—not—not to save his life!”

Mr. Tinkham, who had been until now beyond earshot, stood among the boxes and barrels in the rear and regarded his wife with the only grin I ever saw upon his sour face. It was at once appreciative and victorious.

Mrs. Tinkham deflated and sat down apparently without knowing that she had received this applause. Still one cannot be sure in a case like this. A woman can walk from the room and mean something by slamming the door behind her that she would not dare to say so sharply in words to her husband. And a man can deal with his wife by merely going out and not coming to dinner, nor getting in until long after the supper things are cleared away; and when he does come in he can be perfectly sober when all this day she has been expecting him to return intoxicated. He can look tired and depressed and take off his shoes as if these shoes were shackles and get in bed while she pleads with him to have something to eat. They have years of practice in doing this kind of business with one another. So I could only wonder if Mrs. Tinkham had a momentary grudge against her husband or if she was carrying on a sort of virago flirtation with him.

I doubted, however, if Harper was to blame

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

because his wife had gone mad. They were both in the toils of the land. They spent themselves, not rationally but submissively, according to the laws of Nature. The woman failed because she had more to bear and less endurance.

I had seen the tragedy of poverty which if not relieved produces the ablest criminals and the lowest forms of degradation. Along with other respectable people I had contributed to the relief of the poor. But here was something more terrible than poverty hidden beneath the opulence of Nature. Here was a tragedy with the eyes of innocent, dutiful women and the bowed shoulders of men who could not give up the struggle. Poor gamblers against almighty odds. The sunlight upon the fields and farm houses, the singing silence, the bloom and verdure of the land produce the aspect of peace and plenty which does not exist. Somewhere a thousand miles away prosperous men with soft white hands figure down the price of these harvests and figure up their own profits. Meanwhile Nature makes her economies by consuming the people. This accounted for the case of Milly Harper and for the peonage of the children to the land. For nowhere else do children work such long hours or endure such hardships. They become too stupid to learn. They are born to become the slaves of the land. And when by some

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

lack of quality or courage they do escape from it they rarely rise above the lowest forms of industrial labor in the cities and factories. It will be interesting twenty-five years from now to know how many great men in this country were born and bred on the land. There will not be one. Conditions are changed since Lincoln plowed all day and read history by the firelight on his mother's hearth in a log cabin.

Such was the copy of my reflection in August of this year. I was still rational. I could think rationally in the terms of the world where I had lived. I had no plan for the future. I was not committed to the land. I was determined only to save the family estate, much as one withholds family portraits at an auction sale.

Then came the day when I had gone to look at Manson's corn, the superlative moment when the old relation was established between me and Redfields plantation. After that the meeting with Manson, the cyclone, and the scene between us when, drenched and trembling, I had declared war against him. From this moment I was not the same woman. I was committed without fear to an adventure which from every angle of reason was impossible to accomplish. The temptation I had immediately after coming home to let Redfields plantation go, return to New York and pursue my own career was the



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

sensible solution of my problem. Now I rejected it as unthinkable.

What I mean is this: that the spell of the land had fallen upon me. What I am trying to prove by the experiences set down in this story is that there is magic in the land; that this explains why men live and die by it, why they do not organize and "strike" or slink off and quit. They cannot. Their minds are holden. The curse of Adam is upon them like an awful blessing beneath which they move and have their being. It is spiritual, the land is. And stronger than the spirit of man.

I had the time at last to face the situation. Father was a care but no longer a burden. He drifted from his bed to his chair during August. In September he was able to shuffle downstairs, attended by Ike. He was a child, gentle and gray, who lived in the soft cadence of dreams. He was never really awake. Only once had I caught so much as a glimpse of the man he had been. Late one afternoon we were seated on the veranda, father dozing as usual, while I rummaged through a package of papers looking for the records of his former dealings as master of Redfields plantation. Presently I heard the clatter of horse's feet, accompanied by the whoops and yells of the rider. Then the massive figure of a man seated upon a frantic little sorrel horse shot past upon the road below.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I took it in and glanced at father. He was sitting perfectly erect with the neighing look one old charger may have when he hears another going by. There was a spark in his eye, the squeal of a smile on his face.

"That's Winch! He is drunk," he rumbled.

But he could not hold this keen blade of a thought. He slipped slowly back into that somnambulant figure of magnificent old innocence. There was no mark nor shadow of a transgression upon him. He was forever removed from them. How much more, then, are the best of us and the worst of us removed from our sins and our virtues by death. When this of us which betrayed the immortal of us is dust past all power to think or remember, how shall we be praised or punished hereafter for the deeds done in the flesh?

I felt the guilt of a theological transgression, but strangely tender toward father.

"Nancy," he murmured pulingly, "isn't it time for my milk?"

I do not say that the craving of milk is an evidence of repentance, but it certainly indicated a singular purification of taste when we considered father's former cravings.

I had not seen Black Manson since the day of the storm. The only news I had of him was that the army worms had practically devoured his corn.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Mrs. Tinkham said he appeared to be annoyed but in no wise cast down.

"That man's got something on the world, or he couldn't take a body blow like that 'thout changing his expression," she exclaimed.

"Do you know him, Nancy?"

"I have seen him," I answered discreetly.

"Well, I ain't got a thing against him; not a thing, but I just naturally don't like him."

"Why?"

"I don't know. But I ain't by myself. He doesn't make friends; seems as if he don't feel the need of friends. Walks in here, gets his mail and walks off without saying 'peet turkey' to anybody, as if he didn't have to be pleasant on account of wanting to borrow your disk harrow or your buggy harness or anything folks like us have to lend to each other. And he don't. He's got everything or the money to get it. But he needn't rub it in. We ain't rich, but we've got our feelings!"

She had followed me to the door of the store on my way out and she was standing in it shading her eyes with one hand, making a sort of face at Black Manson's cabin on the edge of the distant wood.

"And no matter how much a man needs some tool Manson's got, he won't go up there to borrow it. That's a bad sign, when folks don't like you well enough to borrow from you!"

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Learned men are teaching psychology in the universities who do not know as much about the practical application of this science as Mrs. Tinkham does.

“And there is at least one man about here who hates him worse than pisen. I don’t say he has cause to hate him, but first thing we know something is going to happen up there!” she added significantly.

It would be a friendly act to warn Manson, advise him to borrow somebody’s plow or do something by way of acknowledging his human dependence upon his neighbors, I reflected. But I was not the one to undertake these good offices. One cannot consistently show concern for the safety of a man upon whom one has wished vengeance and declared war. Still I was anxious.



## CHAPTER IX

The whole of Redfields plantation had been rented this year. There were eight tenants. Toward the end of September the hay was cut and the cotton was beginning to open. I was very busy from morning until night looking after the shocking and curing of this hay, taking my toll and keeping a record of the cotton ginned, seeing that my bales were duly delivered to the warehouse at Redfields station.

This supervision was an innovation for which I was destined to pay dearly. Father used the honor system in dealing with his tenants. He trusted them and accepted his rents without question. Undoubtedly they also trusted him, but my experience quickly proved that they practiced no kind of honor when it came to delivering rents.

I was too busy for the flummery of romance. I could only spare the time to answer Oliver's letters briefly. I was about Oliver now as a woman is about a piece of finery that she cannot use but keeps laid away in lavender. I sent him rose leaf notes occasionally and dismissed him with this dim fragrance of a former rose.

One afternoon I came up from the hay press in

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

the field behind the barn where we were baling hay. The frock I wore had been fresh enough in the morning, but now it was mussed, covered with dust, and one of the draperies had been torn. My hair was untidy, and I had long since passed the fine satin shade of tan so much admired in the best society. My nose was blistered. The sun was shining hotly, but there was a strong wind blowing. I arrived, you may say, on this wind from barnward, the torn panel of my dress flying in it like the ragged feathers of a moulting fowl.

The moment I turned the corner of the house I caught sight of father at the far end of the veranda. He was standing up, leaning sidewise upon his cane, with a sort of mettlesome look on his face. It was the rhetorical attitude of broken-down eloquence, and very perilous, seeing that he was in no condition to trust his legs.

There was a visitor, I inferred, still invisible to me behind one of the intervening columns of the veranda. Instantly, however, I caught sight of the shadow cast by this person on the wall of the house. Legs neatly crossed, back gently bowed, one elbow sticking out, one folded close to his side, head lifted, fine brow line, Grecian nose, beautiful chin, enough neck, no animation. I knew of no other man on earth who habitually took so much pains composing his own shadow.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Oliver!" I exclaimed, flying around the column to greet him.

"Nancy!" he returned in a retching tone of voice, as if the sight of me was an unexpected pain.

With our hands still clasped he regarded me. So might one stare at a beloved picture after vandals had smeared it and changed it according to their savage fancy. In this instant of time I ceased to be the bright taper of loveliness in the dark tomb of despair where Oliver kept his passion and sensibilities. I became a shocking fact with blowzy hair and a sun-blistered nose.

"I am so glad to see you; when did you get here?" I asked, hurrying forward to help father sit down, which he could not do without assistance.

"I motored out from Cameron. Might have come on to Redfields if I had known the express stopped here."

"It doesn't," I told him. "Nothing stops here but the dinkey," referring to the one-coach accommodation train.

Father had been piteously anxious to carry on as host, but now he wanted to know if it was time for his milk. The sight of me always reminded him to ask for this nourishment.

I wondered as I went for the milk what train Oliver could take, and the soonest. For I knew very well that he was also speculating on this same

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

train, and about how he should get through the intervening scenes without doing too much violence to his sickened sensibilities.

Redfields house had been built before these softened times, when comfort and cleanliness depend upon modern conveniences. There were no electric lights nor bathrooms in it. The guest chamber was furnished, you may say, with every harsh and majestic inconvenience. The walls were gray, laid off in panels with gold lines. The ceiling was lofty and frescoed with a garland of all possible and incredible flowers. At each of the four corners an exceedingly fat cupid with butterfly wings appeared to be holding on for dear life to the ends of these wreaths. They hung suspended by their stodgy legs and even through the dust of many years one could plainly see a look of fear in the round faces of these little infant gods.

There was a four-poster bed with a canopy of satin, very old and faded to the shade of robin's-egg blue. The terrorized eyes of the dangling cupids always seemed to be fixed upon this canopy as a possible means of breaking their fall in case of accident. A portable staircase of three mahogany steps led upward to the lofty platform of this bed, which was always covered with a white-fringed counterpane as the tops of high mountains are covered with snow. There was a highboy, where since



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

time began in this house the women of it kept their finery. Between the two front windows there was a terrifically carved bureau, austere furnished with two slim silver candlesticks, a silver-back brush and comb, and a magnificent pin cushion which had never been violated by a pin—no powder, no perfume, no toilet pots of any kind. Likewise the marble-top center table bore a very tall glass lamp with a ground-glass globe wreathed in clear-glass dogwood blossoms. This lamp stood pedestal deep in a splendidly ruffled crocheted mat known as the “fern pattern.”

Coldness and austerity could not surpass the provisions made on this washstand for frigid cleanliness. There was a silver ewer, a shallow silver basin, and a very large soap bowl of silver. In the adjacent corner there were two tall copper pitchers, such as maids still carry filled with hot water up flights of stairs in lodgings in old Belgrave Square in London. And finally there was a white porcelain tub of no mean dimensions. It was decorated inside the rim with an opulent wreath of red roses, thorns and splendid green leaves. When you think of it, especially the thorns, this was a daring illustration for the inside of a bathtub. But I recall the stolen pleasure I had in it as a little girl. Aphrodite rising from the white foam of a virgin sea never felt more enhanced than I did sitting cross-legged in this

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

tub, splashing water, surrounded by this garland of roses blinking at me through the spray.

While I hurried getting father off to bed for the night and laying the table for the evening meal I thought of Oliver seated in one of the prim maiden chairs against the wall of this guest chamber staring about him like a man in bleak weather far from home. No softness anywhere, not an inch of vanity, but pride and space everywhere. He was so neutral and impersonal as a human being that he survived by artificial respiration so to speak, borrowed animation from the life about him. He was an ascetic who could never have lived in a cell or on a desert. He must have charm, gayety and color for the background of his ghost. He was the kind of man who would require the very things in a room to twinkle at him. I wondered which was causing him the greater anguish, that glaring chromo bathtub or those four fat little pancake gods painted on the ceiling overhead. He was by way of being a post-impressionist in matters of art. He had even reached the post-mortem stage of being a cubist. A certain shade of green entranced him. A certain tone of brown excited in him the deepest emotions. A bit of canvas checked off in green and violent red with not even a nose to define its meaning he could instantly recognize as the portrait of a warrior, although it might look like nothing but the fragment

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

of a split basket to the eye of a normal person. I do not know why this addled mysticism about art in him ever appealed to me. I suppose for the same reason veils do. He was a man who wore chiffon veils of many hues over the face of his imagination. Now after these months of harsh objective existence Oliver and his diaphanous subterfuges for thought and vision seemed to me effeminate and ridiculous.

At last I ran swiftly upstairs to make my own toilet. There were only a few minutes to spare, and I flew about the room, flinging off the things I had on, pulling out drawers, looking for other things to put on after the joyfully distracted manner of a woman who is in great haste to become what she was not the moment before merely by changing her garments. Having dragged a bed full of frocks from every place, I halted before the mirror to do my hair while I made up my mind whether I would be a modest maiden to Oliver, in a white organdie with a blue sash tied about my waist or something easier for me to be.

When my hair was laved and bound closely until it fitted my head like a soft bright crown the girlish organdie was out of the question. I stood for a moment in my briefest garment considering this matter. Then I flew to the chest of drawers, pulled out the bottom one and drew forth a gown that had lain so long in its shroud of tissue paper that it was

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

as flat as a flower pressed during some former spring-time. It was a slim satin thing, rose pink, the bodice smooth and plain, cut pridefully low on the shoulders, the skirt slashed and draped over a soft dusty yellow petticoat. The two shades were exactly those of a Gold of Ophir rose. A pair of pale green satin slippers lay in the bottom of this drawer like two glistening leaves. I thrust my feet in them, over stem-green silk stockings. Then I put on the gown, pacing back and forth before the mirror while I hooked and fastened and made myself into this rose. A woman who receives such answer to prayer must pity every rose that blooms and fades and falls without ever having beheld the image of its loveliness! One last dab of the powder puff to that still faintly glowing ridge of my nose. All these endearing preparations had been made that Oliver might experience a sense of bereavement, not relief, when I broke my engagement to him. And I descended the stairs feeling safer than a woman ever does when she is about to accept a man.





## PART FOUR

### CHAPTER X

I was about to pass on to the veranda when I caught sight of Oliver through the open door in the parlor. He was standing like an elegy before the portrait of the original Kedic McPherson. The artist who painted it may have been a good one; certainly he was truthful. Not even the tone of time had softened the fierce and rugged face of my ancestor. He looked like a very cold day standing before a very hot fire. His hair was red, his beard flamed, his blue eyes glinted as blue does when bright steel is reflected upon it. His bonnet stuck up on his head like a rooster's comb. His kilts were short, his legs bare, and his boots were tremendous. Somehow as he stood there he produced the impression of having his back to a strong wind blowing across bleak hills and icy mists behind him.

I moved noiselessly through the door to Oliver's side and drew my arm through his.

"Do you like him?" I asked, smiling.

"I was just thinking that I did not like him, if

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

you don't mind my saying so," he returned with his eyes still on the picture.

"Not at all," I answered him.

"I doubt if any of us could possibly endure our remoter ancestors in the flesh; they impress me as being a rough and difficult race," he said.

"And so many of them would despise their descendants!" I retorted.

Oliver never resented a thrust. He would invariably fling back a glance, genial and appreciative, as if he said, "Thank you for the sting. I feel it. It proves that I still live." So now his eyes slid from the portrait and rested upon me. He had not really seen me until this moment. The look faded instantly from humor to the soft courting admiration of a lover.

"The same dear, fierce Nancy!" he exclaimed.

I felt as if I were about to be kissed. This would never do under the circumstances. A kiss is something you may take if you are engaged, or about to be; but when you are resolved upon becoming disengaged it is like checking on your account when you have withdrawn your deposit. It is not legal according to the laws of love.

I turned from him, made one step to safety as Ike flung the dining room doors open.

"Dinner is served, Miss Nancy!" he announced.

"Come on, Oliver, I am hungry. We've been

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

baling hay all day," I said, catching the fold of my gown up, showing one green-slippered foot, then the other, just enough to add a leaf to the rose of me.

This reference to the beastly and unbecoming business of baling hay was distasteful to him. He left it to evaporate in silence. But again as he placed me in the tall-back chair at the head of the table I felt the probability of being kissed. It is clairvoyant, that knowledge women have even when their backs are turned to kisses that have not been said.

Fortunately Ike came in at the moment bearing a platter of broiled chicken. Oliver stepped with the stately dignity of a lying man to his place beside me and seated himself.

I do not think it is possible, or was intended by Nature, that women should be entirely honest in matters of love. We employ the same methods, play the same enchantments whether we accept or refuse a lover. But no man knows this or can be made to believe it. His vanity blinds him. I knew now, for example, by the soft cock-a-doodle light in Oliver's eyes that he was regarding me at this moment as an offering made lovely for his pleasure. I knew what was passing in his mind because I knew Oliver: his poor Nancy was about to become involved in his sentimental ideals of duty. Good thing he had come down. Heavens! Suppose he



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

had waited? How long would her vitality and loveliness have lasted in a situation like this!

I was so sure of these plans behind his fine dark eyes that I bent my head lower over the platter as I served his plate and giggled.

"It is good to hear you laugh," he said softly.

With that I leaned back and turned my face the other way, pressed both hands against my breast and let out a heart full of laughter. I caroled it. Now why? I had nothing against Oliver. He was still the same man whom I had accepted. What then was the explanation of this mirthful antagonism to him, which he did not even suspect? I ask the world, I ask all history. Why will a woman do this? And my belief is, the last one of us would if we suddenly found ourselves out of love with a lover, however faithful he is. It is the scandalous, mischievous joy we feel of having escaped something. The truth was that I no longer loved Oliver. My vision had cleared. I saw him, knew him bereaved of the protecting shield of my own imagination. This is enough to make any woman laugh at any man.

After one gale of this laughter I composed myself and went on with my double duties as hostess and rose.

"What have you been doing with yourself this summer?" I asked.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“Thinking of you, wishing for you. Nothing else—Nancy, I can’t bear it—”

Ike came in with the biscuits. Oliver retreated.

Domestic servants and stenographers do greatly affect social conversation and business correspondence. They are fearfully efficient chaperons, when you think of what might happen if they were not so nearly always present or about to be present.

“Tell me about New York—what is going on. It seems years since I was there.”

“To me it has been an eternity! Nancy—”

Ike came in with the potatoes and a dish of baked apples stuffed with sausage. I saw the flash of a frown on Oliver’s smooth brow.

“Did Herman sell his play?” I asked, smiling.

“I think not. Something the matter with that play.”

“Yes, it was good,” I retorted.

Oliver laughed.

“What has become of Sledge?” I wanted to know.

“Disappeared, but he will reappear. I never liked Sledge. He is a sort of intellectual lizard. He runs up and down other people’s ideas. Claims them.”

This was my cue to laugh, remembering how Sledge had put a body to one of Oliver’s fancies and sold it to a magazine.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"You know Sol Stein?" he went on.

"The man Herman used to lug about with him—who tittered when he talked?"

"The same," he nodded. "He was a sort of secretary and literary apprentice to Herman. Well, he has arrived. Writes flapper plays and gives them a moral name. He has stopped tittering and he has dropped poor old Herman."

"Yes, I know. You remember we dropped the Jennings girl the same way," I reminded him.

"Oh, she was a nut. Couldn't write."

"But she could think, and she was straight. I wonder what became of her."

"Still thinking probably, mute inglorious Milton!"

He went on in this acrid vein, discussing our friends in New York. I kept pace with him, getting the swing of the old days, when conversation was either clever cynicism or clever cruelty like this.

All this time Ike had been earnest in his attendance. He plied Oliver with strange dishes like grated-sweet-potato pudding, boiled vegetables, baked ham, hot muffins, an astonishing salad made of hearts of lettuce, crisp, curly mustard topped with red rings of sweet peppers. Oliver regarded his plate as a man might regard a fearful temptation.

Finally the table was cleared and Ike came in

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

with cakes and two tall compote glasses filled with huckleberries and wine, capped with whipped cream. Then he disappeared, Oliver inferred for good, the dessert having been served.

“Nancy, dear love—” he began, leaning toward me.

Ike came through the swinging door with the solemn tread of one who brings the benediction of a feast. He was bearing a small silver tray upon which glistened a coffeepot, a sugar bowl, cream pitcher and two brilliantly flowered after-dinner coffee cups.

He served us and took up his position behind my chair. Like other old family servants in the South he had more than the crumbs from his master's table. He had enjoyed listening to the conversation about it for thirty years.

“What were you going to say?” I asked innocently.

He cast a hissing look over my head at Ike, who no doubt thought it was merely the defect of the Yankee eye. Then he dropped it to my face like a keen reproach.

“I was about to say that somebody who cares to do a smart thing should start a fashion magazine of current literature, call it ‘The Literary Vogue.’ ”

“But we have them, haven't we? Reviews and reviewers,” I objected, smiling another answer to



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

this quick and graceful retreat from the "Nancy, dear love" line of attack.

"What I mean is this," he went on without an answering flash beneath Ike's consuming eye. "Something has happened. It not only affects morals, society, the screen, the theater, every phase of our national life—"

"Heavens! Oliver, you are not becoming a moralist!" I interrupted, lifting my hands like two exclamations of astonishment.

"I was going to say when you snapped the girder of a well-built sentence, Nancy," he began with an injured air, "that whatever this is it has not only changed the mind of our times, it has affected words, the manners, meaning and conduct of words. The very dictionaries are out of date like your last year's frocks."

"So many new ones; yes, of course," I agreed.

Oliver frowned as if he dimmed his light to my stupidity.

"There is no longer any authentic and comprehensive definition to the words we have, always have had," he corrected.

"There is no such thing as a pure literary style to-day. It is a jugglery with words, clever or worse. They are made to caper, prance, toddle in imitation of us."

I laughed, thinking how like Oliver it was to be

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

thrust out of his intellectual elegance and repose by the wind of our times blowing through the language of all times.

“There are no more passive verbs. De Quincey would be as dumb as an oyster if he lived now! There are no more good little adjectives that kneel meekly behind steady old nouns, because there are none. A noun knoweth not the day nor the hour when some enterprising author will throttle him down into a hard-working verb. All parts of speech have lost their dignity and their proper place in the sentence.”

He shot a glance of humorous despair at me, still smiling, and went on:

“You remember Amlett’s story? ‘The Outlaw,’ I think, was the title of the thing.”

“Yes! And the awful evening when he read it aloud to us after your dinner party,” I replied, turning my head away from this still wearying remembrance.

“You recall after he got the outlaw strung up, crouched, quivering to spring, dirk in hand, at the other fellow who had him already, you may say, by the eye, how Amlett put in about a thousand words of reflection, until our suspense changed to disgust?”

“And poor Herman’s nerve broke at last,” I reminded him with a shriek of laughter.

“Yes, Herman leaping to his feet and tearing

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

round the room with his hands in his hair, yelling, 'Unleash him, Amlett! Gad! Stop fizzling and let him say it with the dirk!' This was the only action in that story, as I remember. He could not sell it."

He paused, picked up his coffee cup, stared into it like a man bemused.

"Well, what happened?" I wanted to know, feeling that this halt in the narrative bore a faint resemblance to Amlett's method.

"Did you by any chance read 'One Musketeer' in last month's *Highway Magazine*?" he asked.

"No, I have not seen a copy since I came to Redfields."

"Amlett's story. Same thing exactly, but written in the hissing style of the moment. I was so astonished that I asked Amlett to lunch with me at the club next day. I wanted to find out how he did it. He told me. Simplest thing, you know. Got it from Stacy Ware."

"Stacy Ware!" I repeated incredulously, for I recalled him as a second-rate actor who played the rôle of heavy villain sometimes and again the rôle of lightweight rascal, but always a joyful, smiling villain.

"Amlett says he studied Ware, the man himself. He watched him act, and the lines he said when the audience cheered. He discovered that there was

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

always a 'By George!' or a 'God!' or some smothered exclamation in them, accompanied by leg action. He followed Amlett to his club. It seems the fellow is always in character. Amlett put down all the shock sentences he used. He observed the confidential way Stacy exposed himself in conversation, how he invited opinions with questions. He perceived that the man was never static mentally or physically. He was always going through some tale of his own performances as fast as a man could snap his fingers. Amlett mastered Ware as Walter Besant studied Dickens' novels for five years before he wrote one of his own. Then he wrote that story of his again, in the first person. Put in the 'Gads' and 'By Georges' and kept the hero striding and fighting every inch of the way to where the reader could plainly see the crumbling lips of the bottomless abyss of destiny awaiting him."

"But I thought the outlaw met a good girl, who married him and reformed him," I objected.

"Hero never is reformed now. He grows steadily worse, frankly so. You merely save him from prison, not a life of iniquity. Flapper in breeches saved Amlett's musketeer to that extent."

We had risen from the table. Oliver drew my arm in his.

"I think Amlett has done something very clever," I said.



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Oh, yes, he told me four editors were pressing him for stories. He would say that anyway of course. What liars authors and actors are!" he concluded.

We passed the davenport on one side of the great fireplace, though I felt Oliver hang back as if he meant to stop there; but I chose the high straight-back chair on the other side of the hearth.

"They must be," I said.

"Who?" he demanded.

"Actors and authors."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You said it yourself. I merely confirmed. Only some of us—very few—are authors, and all of us are actors," I answered.

He was standing before the fire; I was staring into it. Followed a silence. There is nothing more perilous between enemies or lovers.

"Are you quarreling, Nancy? You used to quarrel adorably," he said in his soft, Orphean voice.

"No," I answered, leaning back and giving him a cool blue look in exchange for his smile. "I am only acting now. I am done with being an author. I shall never write anything else."

"You are changed. What is it, dear?"

"You would be changed, too, if you had been born again."

"You are in trouble! I have felt it. That is

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

why I came down here. Now tell me all about everything. I can see, of course, your father."

He had drawn an old-fashioned two-armed stool close to me. He sat down and reached for my hand. I placed it securely in my own other hand and held it.

"Father is the least of my cares," I answered.

"Something is wrong," he insisted.

"No, everything is right—with me at last. I have found my place, my work and the life I was meant to live."

"This is preposterous. You cannot be planning to stay here!"

I nodded my head and looked again into the fire.

"But you are engaged to me, Nancy. You have promised to be my wife. And we cannot live here; you know that."

"You could not, but I can, and—I want to. I belong here, nowhere else!" I said.

"You are morbid. You have been brooding. I should have come sooner."

"I am glad you did not. A little while ago I might have been tempted to give up the fight. Now I cannot. I am pledged."

"What fight, what pledge?" he demanded.

"Oliver, you will never understand, but I will tell you," I began.

Then I told him the whole story of father's mis-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

fortunes; what Redfields meant to me; of the debts, of my determination to remain there and pay them and keep the place. I must have showed much the same spirit one shows about rescuing a noble relative from the dire straits of poverty.

Suddenly I halted in the midst of this narrative. Oliver bent nearer. His eyes, fixed on mine, quickened softly. He showed me the corners of a smile, tender but amused, as if what I had been telling him was relatively unimportant.

"So that's it!" he exclaimed, clasping his hand over my hand, resting on the arm of my chair.

"No, Oliver," making an effort to withdraw this hand as one refuses to sign another promissory note.

"Evidently, if there is a God, he is a jealous God," he laughed softly, keeping his hold upon my hand now with both of his.

"You have been sleep-walking toward the Almighty," he went on. "Don't you know that is what idealism is; a somnambulance which leads to complete and hopeless sacrifice. Nothing else, no other reward. It is the sign of the Cross through the ages by which the good and the merciful crucify themselves for the weak and the incompetent. I have been a fool to leave you so long here alone! What a sacrifice you might have made of your life,

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

your loveliness and your tenderness!" leaning forward suddenly and drawing me to him.

"You shall have Redfields! It shall be my wedding present to you," he whispered tenderly.

For one moment, although I no longer loved him, I felt the sweet anguish of love. There cannot possibly be any kind of honesty in the mere nature of us! One instant I lay like a flame against Oliver's breast. And I doubt if it was honor at last which gave me the strength to thrust him from me, but it was the quick flash of moonlit darkness through my memory, peopled with stars and shadows and one man.

"You—I must not!" I gasped.

We sat there, I with my hands pressed now against my breast, regarding him breathlessly and tearfully; he, erect, flushed, covering me with a stare of angry amazement.

"I knew you would not understand," I began, speaking with the fierce energy of self-defense. "You cannot give me Redfields."

"Why?" in a tone which implied curiosity; not as if he had any longer a desire to make this gift.

"Because Redfields is a part of me. It is the land from which I literally did come. It is closer kin than flesh or blood. It will be here when nothing else kin to me is. I must save it and hold it.



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

It cannot be bought or given, but kept like—like a virtue.” I concluded haltingly, seeing that he was not even attentive to what I was saying. He sat elegantly composed, with a sort of listening look on his face as if the loud beating of my heart told him every secret a woman never tells. He heard this, not my voice.

“Besides,” I went on after a pause, “I am changed. I am not the woman you knew, loved, in New York. And here—where I belong—I do not—could not feel the same—to you.”

His gaze had become personal to me again, not familiar but distant and appraising.

“Well, go on,” he encouraged with the flicker of a smile.

“That is all,” I breathed.

“I thought better of you, Nancy. I really believed you were different—from me, all of us. I counted on your truthfulness. Your artless and invincible candor intrigued me,” he said, politely triumphant.

“What do you mean?”

“That love is the great illusion, stronger than any ideal, or conscience or resolution. You make a subterfuge of Redfields to conceal the truth. It is unworthy of you. I thought you had more courage.”

“I have courage,” I exclaimed hotly.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Not enough to admit the truth. There is some one else."

"No!" I cried.

I felt a tide rising, hot and blinding. My face burned. I caught a fold of my dress, held it tightly as we cling to something or anything to keep from losing everything. Yet slowly my eyes fell before Oliver's, who had risen and stood looking down at me.

"It makes no difference, but why should you deny it? I suppose it is the woman of you!" he sneered.

"There is no one else," I sobbed, covering my face, feeling more anguish for my innocence than I could have felt if I had been more successfully guilty of this charge.

There are fearful truths hidden in all of us which we ought never to admit. At this moment I would gladly have passed a life sentence upon Oliver to love me, knowing well how incapable I must always be now of returning his love. Men are different. Once they are out of love with a woman they resent her devotion. It is abhorrent to them.

Some slight movement Oliver made caught my attention. I looked up in time to see him thrust his watch back into his pocket.

"Ten o'clock. Car should be here now," he said, glancing toward the window with the hurried look of an impatient traveler.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"What car?"

"Taxi from Cameron. Man promised to come—"

"But Oliver," I interrupted, rising. "You were not—of course you will not go to-night."

I knew that he had had no such intention earlier in the afternoon. It was I who had speculated then upon his hasty departure.

He omitted me on his way to the window. At the same moment we both heard the purr of a motor approaching the house.

"I'll run up for my bag. No time to lose," he said, turning again to me.

"Good-by, Nancy; it's been a great experience. And I am grateful," he said, catching my hand in a quick clasp, giving me a look which was not quite devoid of irony.

Even then I might have flung myself upon his breast but for the sudden realization that he had provided for this escape, probably by phone, after his arrival and before he could possibly have known that I meant to release him.

I gave him a look for his look, a smile for his irony, in which I think no shadow of defeat showed.

"Good-by, dear. You were right. There is some one else," I said with a laugh.

One cannot really strike the shadow of a substance. Still I felt Oliver's hand tremble as he released mine. The next moment he was on the stairs.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Almost immediately I heard him descending; then the bang of the door of the taxi, the roar of the motor and two swiftly moving moons of light as the car passed the window.

I stood as he had left me in that vast room, making up my accounts as a woman. It is a form of emotional arithmetic that can always be done by heart. My appearance that afternoon when I came up from the hay press had shocked Oliver. He was not the man to make love to any creature so obvious, healthy and disheveled.

Father's condition must have been abhorrent to him, like some form of decay with human eyes and a beard. The worn-out splendors of this old house must have depressed him. He was not a man for all weathers. To become the son-in-law of such a situation even in New York offended his neurasthenic imagination. When he came down to the parlor before dinner he had seen the telephone. While he was waiting for me to join him he had called the garage at Cameron and ordered the taxi, to take him back in time to catch the midnight express for New York.

This, I decided, was what had happened. Then I had come down, pink and golden, smoothed and fashioned as he had always seen me. The expiring lover of him was revived. His confidence was restored. His ardor was the stronger by this reaction.



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Probably if I had left the room directly after dinner he would have hastened to countermand that order for the taxi. Upon such trivial circumstances may the fate of lovers depend. A thought never uttered may divide them forever. A look may unite them. My Gold of Ophir gown had won Oliver back to me. The image of a man in my heart as faint as the sense of guilt for a deed you cannot commit had sundered us forever.

There was a long mirror in a gilt frame on the wall of the parlor between the two front windows. I caught my reflection in it, took a step nearer and regarded this last rose of myself. I felt more than forlorn: bereaved, strangely fearful. All the boughs of my mind seemed to tremble, shed their bloom in the blast from the windy years to come.

I moved about the room putting out the candles that had glowed upon me and enhanced me. A woman feels very queer sometimes when she is alone and about to be in the dark and does not know where her next loaf of a lover is to come from. I crept upstairs to my room in the pitch dark, undressed in it and lay down upon my bed as if this bed had become the grave of the woman I should never be again.

## CHAPTER XI

Early in September five of the eight tenants on Redfields plantation gave notice. I asked Mr. Shorts, the first one, why he was going. His explanation was brief and of such a nature as to admit of no argument. He said he was a man and preferred to deal with men in business. He doubted if he could "get along with a woman."

That settled it. I could not change my gender.

The worry I had collecting rents and closing accounts with these men was the beginning of the enchantment of troubles which bound me closer day by day to Redfields. I was not aware of the fact that failure stared me in the face when only three tenants were willing to take the desperate chance of renting land from me another year. I had no time to plan what I would do with the five hundred acres of land they were leaving.

My impression is that under the new dispensation of citizenship and other industrial advantages only half of the problem for women has been solved. They may vote, and they may obtain employment from men and corporations. But I doubt if the Almighty himself can make an adjustment by which men can be induced to work for women on the

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

purely commercial and industrial basis. They do work for them. There are thousands of men in this country in peonage to their wives and daughters. They spend themselves in the vain effort to provide for the comfort and indulgence of these women who belong to them, and they are prideful about that. But secretly and forever it is a humiliation to any kind of man to hire to a woman no matter how well she pays him, nor how fairly she treats him. And he has the same instinct for deceiving her in business that he has always exercised in the nearer domestic relationships. Only if she may be hoodwinked is she endurable to him. But if she will persist in seeing through his deceits he regards her as unnatural and unbearable. I do not know why this is so, but it is.

Besides these cares, which multiplied as the season advanced, I was anxious about father's affairs. It was useless to question him. And I could find no record among his papers of the mortgage. But it had been duly recorded in the county clerk's office at Cameron. It was given for the sum of twenty thousand dollars to Black Manson one year and eight months previous to this time. And it was to be paid three years from date. In short, I had one year and four months in which to raise this sum, plus the interest which amounted to fourteen hundred dollars a year. I could find no receipt nor

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

cancelled check to show that interest had been paid the previous year.

So long as she has a lover or a husband there is something between a woman and the inevitable. Even if this is a purely imaginary fortification she gets a soothing sense of protection from the mere presence of this man in her life. The next morning after Oliver's departure I found myself in these reduced circumstances. I was bitterly rational. For the first time I faced the situation at Redfields with no mental or romantic reservations upon which to rest.

Shortly after lunch, having settled father before the library fire for his afternoon nap, I climbed into his old roadster and drove to Cameron. I went at once to the First National Bank and asked for Mr. Morrison. For years father had kept his deposits and his debts in this bank. If any one could furnish information about his affairs Morrison should be able to do so.

He was a little, round, rubicund-faced man. His head was bald on top, very pink; his crisp gray hair stuck out above his ears. His eyes were narrow, blue. One received the impression that he sharpened these eyes as a cat sharpens its claws. That is to say, when he looked at you they seemed to stick in. He had a clever mouth and a false-tooth smile. You would have said that he was a rascal.



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

As a matter of fact he was merely a very good business man. He could not be moved by another's needs, however imperative. He invariably had a hunch about what kind of securities to buy, which man could or should not be trusted. In short your money was safe in his bank. And his advice was good.

He received me in his private office as a widow or an orphan is sometimes received—behind the scenes in a bank, where the last fearful settlements are to be made according to the facts and the debit column the deceased left behind him, of which you, as the widow or the orphan, are usually totally ignorant.

His manner was as grave as that; not a tooth of his smile gleamed. He wished me good afternoon, bade me be seated and asked about father's health.

We got through with that. Then I asked him about father's balance in the bank. Unfortunately there was no balance, he said firmly, as if he expected an unreasonable woman might deny this. In that case he had the cancelled checks, beginning to whisk papers about in his desk in search of these checks. I said that I was not surprised, whereupon he left off looking for them and looked at me. His eyes sunk in, but I was aware of the inward purring of his mind. The sight of me, I inferred, was grateful in case I was sensible and did not appeal to his

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

sympathies. So few women understood that a banker could not afford to be sympathetic!

I came at once to the point. I mentioned the mortgage. He nodded his head solemnly as if I had mentioned a funeral. I asked him if he knew whether the interest had been paid last year.

He did not know. But he rather inferred that it had not been paid.

"Your father was an honest man, superlatively so, but he had no head for business," he said in a tone which implied that now it was probably too late for business.

"I doubt if he was in a position to pay Manson. He was hard pressed last fall," he added gently.

"You might find out from Manson," I suggested.

"I could hardly do that under the circumstances. He has no account with us or any other bank in Cameron, I believe," he informed me with an air of offended dignity, meaning that Manson had insulted these banks by the palpable omission of these financial courtesies.

"Well, if it has not been paid it must be!" I announced.

"But how?"

"There is the cotton, and I shall have some hay to sell."

"Cotton is down and slipping every day. Enough hay would be better. But twenty-eight hundred

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

dollars is quite a sum. Besides there would be the interest on the unpaid interest of last year. You will find it difficult to raise so much," he said.

I retorted by taking a check from my purse.

"You may deposit this to my account."

"A thousand dollars!" he murmured, staring cordially at this elegant piece of paper.

"The advance royalties on my book," I offered, feeling that it was not necessary to add that these royalties were rarely duplicated by later sales.

He was polite. He had not seen the book. What was the title? Ah! "Three Lovers!" Very good! He must get it. Then he went back to the check, looked on the back to see if it was properly indorsed.

"This might help, of course, but I do not advise you to spend it that way," he said without looking up.

"Why?"

"Well, it is too much to lose and not enough to save the situation."

"What do you advise?"

"You can do something. You know how. Very few women do. They know how to be good or not good. Or maybe earn a wage. My advice to you is to do the thing you know, write."

"But," I exclaimed, "it is not so easy to earn

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

enough to pay this mortgage on Redfields. Besides—”

“Why pay it? Let Redfields go.”

I felt as if he had uttered a blasphemy.

“I know how you feel. Every one feels that way about an old home place.”

“No, they do not,” I interrupted. “If they did land would not be for sale. It would remain in the family, the people who live on it would love it and build it and keep it as they do their honor. It is the only way to make an enduring civilization. Root men in the land. Then we should have some peace and permanency. We should not be selling and moving hither and thither.”

He listened, watching me with his keen claw eyes.

“And the land. Think of that. It is the one eternal thing we can see with the naked eye. The foundation of everything, always being sold, always passing from one stranger to another. Not loved, never cherished. It is like selling your parent into slavery, speculation on your closest kin. This shall never happen to Redfields!”

“Sentiment, Nancy, admirable sentiment, but it does not get you anywhere in this situation. This is why land is sold—for only one of two reasons, to make money or to pay debts. How else can you meet your father’s obligations?”



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I was silent.

“Have you any definite plan?”

“Only to live there and—and work it out,” I stammered.

“But how? Have you rented for another year?”

I told him about that—the tenants leaving.

“Do you realize what an outlay of capital you would require to farm all that land yourself? Have you had any experience? Do you know what labor is?”

I did not know, only that a lot of men were unemployed. There should be no difficulty about obtaining labor.

“They are without work, those men, because they will not work. The virus of the rich has entered the poor. They will not work! They walk the streets looking for jobs. You will never hear of them on country roads looking for work. They don’t want it. They are lazy, bad. You could not manage such labor. Nobody can. It is the sediment in the cup of our national life. This is why presently you will see the Government providing public works for these men—bridges, road building. That, my dear Nancy, will be political charity by taxation!”

He went on hotly:

“Remember the culvert over that little stream this side of Redfields station?”

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Yes," I said half smiling, knowing that he was suffering from the universal animus which follows the payment of taxes.

"That is an example of what I mean. Took nine men ten days to put in that culvert. They were paid anywhere from five to eight dollars a day. Public work, you understand! This county pays twenty per cent of all taxes to keep up its roads. What have we? Six hundred miles of mud and ruts, not ten miles of solid road in it!

"Well, do you think labor will make any distinction when it comes to work on a farm? Not on your life. Bless my soul, aren't they trying to unionize farm labor at this very moment!" he exclaimed, bringing his fist down with a bang that made the papers on the desk titter.

"Imagine trying to get in a hay crop with eight-hours-a-day men! It is preposterous! Something is going to happen, Nancy, to the land next. You'd better keep out of the way of it! What does it cost you to write a book? What's the investment?" he demanded, narrowing his eyes to two blazing blue points.

"I don't know. I have never thought about it," I answered.

"Bottle of ink. Say, a quart of ink, though I should think you ought to get four or five books out of that much ink."

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I laughed.

"Well, that's seventy-five cents, best quality. Three or four pounds of paper, one dollar."

I threw up my hands and shrieked. My mirth was not contagious.

"That's the layout. One dollar and seventy-five cents," he went on seriously.

"You forgot postage."

"Make it fifty cents, though that is padding your expense account," he said, jotting this item down.

"I must live. That costs something," I suggested.

"Of course. You must live. Now what does that cost?" eying me, pencil suspended.

"One can do it modestly in New York on five hundred dollars a month," I told him.

He glared at me. The hand holding the pencil stiffened virtuously.

"This is rank extravagance!" he exclaimed. "If you had to, you could live and work on, say, a hundred dollars a month."

"Well, make it a hundred, though I never have," I told him.

"That is a hundred and two dollars and twenty-five cents—"

"But you allow only a month," I protested.

"Well, how long does it take to write a book?"

"That depends," I hedged.

"Make it three months," he suggested. "If you

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

kept at it I should think you might write a very good story in three months. Three hundred and six dollars and seventy-five cents you invest, and you may receive from a thousand to, say, twenty thousand in royalties."

"That is a gross exaggeration," I protested.

"You have already earned more than three hundred per cent on your investment with this last one," he retorted, tapping the check I had given him. "If I made such profits on the moneys in this bank, I should be behind the bars in no time. I should serve from five to twenty years in the penitentiary for cheating and swindling!"

"Now what do you suppose it would cost you to finance Redfields plantation for a year? Not less than ten thousand dollars. And all the risks added of floods and droughts which may destroy your harvests."

I remained stubbornly silent.

"I am talking sense, Nancy, not sentiment," he insisted.

"There is a sense of things which cannot be computed in dollars," I retorted.

"Maybe so. I am not denying that. But the world you live in, the people you deal with do not recognize it—that kind of sense. Besides, Nancy, you are in the air. You have no plan."

"I shall make one," I returned stoutly.



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

He threw up his hands and stared at me despairingly.

Then he folded them on the desk before him, leaned upon them and came back at me hammer and tongs.

"Suppose you gave yourself up to this project and succeeded, even granting that would be possible, have you considered what will happen?" he asked.

"I should be a proud and happy woman," I told him.

"No, you would not. You would be a tired broken woman or a tired fierce one. Life on a farm roughs a woman up, and it tears her down. It rubs the bloom off. It fades her, takes away the delicacy and grace of her beauty. It makes her silent, if not stupid. Men of your own class do not love such women."

I thought of Oliver and flushed.

"Don't be angry, my dear," seeing this color flame in my cheeks. "I only want to save something rare and fine. You will allow an old man and a friend of your father's to pay you the compliment you deserve. It is not flattery. Keep yourself. Don't make a vain sacrifice."

"Sell Redfields. There is a boom right now in land. It will not last. Make haste to advertise the place for sale. Manson will buy it. He wants it."

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

He will offer a good price. Before the end of the year you could have settled all accounts and be back in New York with nearly a hundred thousand dollars in your pocket. The struggle would be over before it begins. You would be safe, comfortable, still young, worth so much in loveliness. You could provide better for your father. And where Kedic McPherson is now makes no difference. He no longer knows nor thinks."

I had risen. I was moving toward the door, looking back at him reproachfully. He followed me, talking very fast, trying to detain me.

"I will not sell Redfields to Black Manson," I said.

"Oh, very well; sell it to some one else then, but sell it. Sell it, Nancy!"

"Not while I live!" I cried, feeling the hot tears in my eyes. I have always been subject to tears and laughter.

"Think it over, my dear," he entreated, taking my hand at the door, caressing it, you may say, pityingly, with his other hand. "Don't commit yourself to this—this admirable folly until you think it over!"

He was a kind man, I decided, but not one from whom I might hope to borrow money.

## CHAPTER XII

I should have been depressed, and was not. Depression, I believe, is a form of selfishness. You cannot feel it without being woefully conscious of yourself. This is the reason why so many women and a few men live lives of what seems to others senseless sacrifice. They are intoxicated spiritually. They become addicted to a sort of divine inebriation. They have escaped from themselves, their own desires. It is a tremendous liberty to achieve. I had some such sensation as this. I was redeemed from the world, restored to the land, the original birthright of every man and every woman. There was a mortgage on this birthright, to be sure, but that was a worldly matter, to be overcome as one overcomes the world, maybe the flesh, sometimes the devil. That mortgage did not concern me in this mood. I had an inkling of what it is to be a Christian, the same high emotional piety which I imagine they sometimes feel. That is to say, I was magnificently financed for the moment with the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. There was everything to fear, and I feared nothing. I was sublime. What else is it to be a Christian?

Cameron is twenty miles from Redfields. I drove

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

slowly along the country road through valleys sparkling with the last flare of summer flowers, over hills that were gray with stubble, through forests where the October leaves blazed red and golden—feeling everything, the light, the charm, the sweet ripeness of the air, taking a breath of this wind as it flew by. I saw the tops of trees nod to me as one friend greets another friend passing on the road. A red bird perched among the redder pods of sumac whistled a note to me. I primped my lips and whistled back. He flirted his tail and cocked his eye. I laughed. I was related to this bird. I was home again with all these first things created, the grass, the herbs of the fields, where the best is meant and nothing is said. I had made my vows to the land for better or for worse. I was ineffably happy. So do brides go to their husbands—not knowing.

You will understand that this was some kind of incantation. For not three months before I held other views altogether. I was able then to see clearly the conditions about me and to reason accordingly. I was appalled then by the poverty and hardships endured by the people next to the land. I was impatient with their patience. It seemed stupid. I was in a fever to escape from this monotony, the secret desolation, the awful impending providences which hung forever over the land and



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

the harvest and these living souls. Now I was one of them, taking root in these vicissitudes, ready to live and die according to the weather and the almighty will of God in the land. Never doubt Genesis! The truth of all truths is recorded there. We are born to the land, and to nothing else; neither to wealth, nor fame, nor ideas, nor wisdom, but to the land and the everlasting urge in that curse by which Adam was ordained. We may think we can escape it, but we cannot. The institutions, the civilizations we build—they are blown away in a gust of war, in the revolutions which pass through the minds of men without the firing of a gun. Only the land remains. Five cities may be found one above the other buried in the same pile of dust, and the grass grows green above. And men plow a field where Troy stood. The queer thing is that the great masses of men never think what this means. There is a sort of centrifugal force in their madness which drives them to whirl and whirl into cities, until their very frenzy destroys what they have made. No city, no great commercial center of any kind can possibly last. It is a sort of bad place on the land choked with human weeds. What they produce is not good. It is the root of many evils.

But if you are born of the clean dust, if the salt in your veins has not lost its savor, you always have the chance of coming back. Some day through the

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

smoke of a thousand factories and furnaces you get a glimpse of blue sky which reminds you of a hill or a field or the little house where you were born beside a country road, and where you lived before you made this damnable rise in the world which landed you in a city office with a dozen push buttons under the edge of your mahogany desk for summoning your clerks and secretaries. You desire above everything to go back there. It is the call of the land like the voice of God in you. Of course you do not go back. You have lost your stamina. You know it. You know that you have no real life in you, only the reflections of life and moods and markets in you. So you remain where you are, and push the buttons under your desk until some fine morning Nature pushes her button—the one that calls you. Then you get a stroke. And you are presently laid by your heels in the family vault on your lot in the city cemetery, with a load of hothouse flowers spread about to conceal what a fool you have been all your successful life. Even then it is possible that the very dust of your bones aches for the little old graveyard behind the country church and a comfortably leaning tombstone, and a little grass growing kindly upon the sod above you. But you will never get it! When your funeral decorations fade not even the wind can blow a seed that will sprout on a mausoleum!

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

When I reached Redfields house late in the afternoon Ike met me as usual, but with more of the whites of his eyes showing than usual. This is the mark of news in the negro countenance.

"Father all right?" I asked cheerfully.

"He done gone to baid, Miss Nancy," gathering up the packages in the bottom of the car.

"At this hour? It is not four o'clock! Is he ill?" anxiously.

"No'm, jest narvous. I ain't been long took him upstairs. He restin' quiet as a hawk in a tree now."

"But why did he go to bed?" I insisted as we entered the house.

Ike, with his arms full of the purchases I had made in Cameron, halted, crooked himself sideways as if he dodged some invisible blow and rolled his eyes ominously at the library door.

"She's in dar!" he whispered hoarsely.

"Who?" also fixing my eyes on this door.

"Mrs. Broadwick!" in a still lower whisper. "She came 'reckly after you lef'. Your pa stood it untel three o'clock. Den he took de fidgets, and I had to take him out. He cain't b'ar dat 'oman! She came over here once while you was away in New York and rid him 'round de ring about de way he was doin'. She preached him a serman on temp'rance and gawdliness. He may be sorter

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

droopy in his haid, but he ain't forgot! Dis evenin' when she come bustin' in on him settin' so peaceful, he cotch one look at her an' his mustaches spread like he was fixin' to fly away on 'em. He was skeert! He's been 'voidin' dat 'oman—"

"Hush, Ike," I interrupted, "take those things to the kitchen and—"

"Nancy! Is that you?" came a woman's deep, raucous voice from the library.

I thrust the door open and entered, not without some trepidation.

I had known Mrs. Broadwick since I was a child. She had been mother's only intimate friend. I remembered her as a large, florid woman who used to sit beside mother's bed and shake when she laughed. And I would be sitting behind the end of mother's trunk, this much protected from the blue omniscience of Mrs. Broadwick's eye. She fascinated me, and I was afraid of her. But when she laughed I stuck my head out and watched her do it. It was like a carol rumbling round in a very big jug until it escaped in a whoop. She is the only woman I ever knew who could whoop her merriment. If they get that far they usually shriek. And there would always be the glow of a smile on mother's pale face, as if this great creature had reached over and lighted a candle there. Mother loved her as the dying love life and light and the firm touch of



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

strong, tender hands. I felt obliged to love her because mother did. Otherwise I should have instinctively avoided her as Adam did his Maker after his first transgression, because even as a young child I never was without some guilt sticking to me, and I always felt that Mrs. Broadwick searched me when she looked at me.

She was larger now, redder; her eyes beneath the wrinkled lids more prominent, glistening with the same terrific intelligence. She was sitting in the largest chair. The arms of it fitted her like two braces.

At the sight of me she engaged in a struggle with her amorphous body. It merely heaved but did not rise. It occurred to me in a flash as I hastened to take her outstretched hands that I might be obliged to call Ike in to pull her out of this chair!

"How do you do, Mrs. Broadwick? I am so glad to see you," I exclaimed, bending to kiss her.

"I should have been over sooner, my dear," she said, still holding my hands and staring up into my face as if she looked for something and did not find it.

"But you see how it is with me. All my years have gone to fat. It is very difficult to get about, or up when I'm down, or down when I'm up!" she went on, releasing me.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I drew a chair close to her and asked her how she had been this hot summer.

She said she had melted, of course, but one could melt and melt, she found, and still grow larger and larger every day.

"You are not in the least like your dear mother, Nancy!" she added, because this was the uppermost thought in her mind. And she would say that one no matter what it was.

"No," I admitted regretfully.

"You are a McPherson, hair and all, but the only pretty woman of that breed I ever saw!" she concluded.

I waited, hoping this would start the rumble of her laughter. But she remained serious, with the corners of her fine strong-lipped mouth drooping.

"Your father seems to be doing very well," she said grimly.

"Yes, better than we dared hope."

"I always liked him," she announced. "And he never understood that I did. I could have loved Kedic McPherson. Any woman would."

"My goodness!" I thought, but aloud I said:

"He is an old darling!"

"Yes, now," she agreed dryly. "But I never blamed your mother for marrying him, though she might have done better by herself," sighing.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I could think of no suitable reply to make to such frankness.

"Nancy," she began after a pause, "I came over to see you this afternoon. I meant to spend it with you. But you were not here."

"I am now," smiling cordially.

"Yes, but it is growing late, the days are so short now. The buggy will be here for me at four o'clock."

"Spend the night, let me telephone them not to come for you," I insisted.

"I wish to die in my own bed. I shall be doing that presently," she said simply.

"Don't think of it," I cried, feeling the chill of her strange fortitude.

"Well, you would, and not so regretfully if you were as old and lonely and as fat as I am. If I'm raised a spiritual body I want to be a slender spiritual body, and young! And if my thoughts could be raised, the wishes I have wished, I should have children there," she went on in her deep, tolling-bell voice.

I was tempted to laugh; then I felt that moisture in the eyes I so often have, the mere prescience of tears. I leaned over and kissed her.

We heard the sound of wheels outside.

"That's Tim with the buggy," she said, "and I haven't told you why I came."

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

She regarded me searchingly. I do not know why, but I blushed.

“Nancy, I must see you,” she exclaimed, as if in answer to my flaming color. “I have something to say to you. It is important. And I haven’t time to say it now. Tim will have the stock to feed when we get home. Can you come over for a while tomorrow afternoon?” her voice was entreating.

“I shall be glad to come.”

“Well, as early as you can. I have so much to say, before it is too late. Did you ever notice how often it is too late to do what we meant to do or to say what we meant to say? Of course not. You are young yet!”

All this time she was struggling, undulating, trying to rise from the chair.

“Give me your hand,” she said.

I did, leaned, swung back like a slender lever—and pulled! She came up slowly, tremendously, planting her stout cane with a whack to steady herself. We started for the veranda before which the buggy stood, she making labored steps with her feet wide apart, still clinging to my hand.

That buggy! One wheel was dished. The body of it set high, spotted as a leopard where the paint had blistered and peeled off. There was no top—only a narrow iron banister at the back and sides of the seat.



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"I can't get into a top buggy. The top is in the way when I climb in," Mrs. Broadwick explained. "Climb" was the word she used.

The harness was no better than the buggy, but the horse, so insecurely attached by it to the shafts, was a splendid contrast. He was black, sleek; he had a flowing satin mane and tail, both very opulent. And he was nearly as fat for a horse as she was for a woman. He was tossing his head, showing more vitality, I thought, than was safe under the circumstances. Besides if she could hardly get out of a chair, how could she get into this buggy?

"I will call Ike!" I said.

"No, Tim knows how to do it," she replied with a resigned air.

Tim, a wiry little old negro, now approached. The horse let himself down hipshot on one side, implying that he might be here quite a while yet.

Mrs. Broadwick reached up, caught hold of the dashboard and the iron rod about the seat, placed one foot on the step and balanced herself perilously. I held my breath while Tim clapped his hands on her and gave a slow lifting push which bent his knees and made his legs tremble. But he certainly did "know how to do it." She landed exactly in the middle of the seat and filled it completely. The springs went down with a creaking sigh. And the procession moved off, the horse stepping slowly but

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

still tossing his head, Mrs. Broadwick sitting aloft, wagging gently back and forth as she sawed on the reins with both hands, Tim bringing up the rear.

“Be sure to come early, Nancy,” she called back.

I told her that I would come early, watched her disappear down the road between the poplars, and then went back to the fire in the library. I wondered what she could have so important to say to me. If she had said “tell” me I should have known it was gossip. But “say” was a personal-to-me word. I hoped she had not by any chance got me on her conscience, because she was the kind of woman who would do her duty no matter what it cost her or the victim of her duty. She frequently left the scars of her righteousness on other people. And she was never to be outdone by anybody. I recalled in this connection a story Mrs. Tinkham had told me.

Mrs. Broadwick had been taken violently ill one night. A physician was hastily called from Cameron.

“It was cholera morbus,” Mrs. Tinkham explained. “That’s what she always has when she gets sick,” implying that if Mrs. Broadwick had a gentler nature she might choose a neater complaint.

“The doctor says he saved her life. Mrs. Broadwick vows he didn’t. She says he gave her warm soda water, which she didn’t retain. And that then

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

she got better of her own accord in spite of him. Anyhow he sent her a bill for fifty-five dollars for the two calls he made. She refused to pay it. She wanted to know how he dared to charge her like that. He said he belonged to an association of doctors which allowed for a charge of twelve dollars for a night call, and one dollar a mile in addition."

Mrs. Tinkham gave me the apostrophe of a glance.

"Now can you imagine what that woman did to him?"

I said I could not.

"Well, she came near to breaking him up. She paid for the calls quick as a flash. But she would not pay for the mileage. Let him measure the distance! Nobody knew exactly how far it was from Cameron to her house! The doctor gave up right there. But she didn't. She had that road measured from her doorstep to his office. I don't know how much that cost her. And she didn't care. She was after him!

"It turned out that he had charged for three miles more than the real distance. She docked his bill and paid accordingly. But that was only the beginning of trouble for the doctor. Most of his practice is among the folks out this way. And now they had the measure of that road. The last one of 'em came back on him for overcharging on mileage!

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

And them that lived on other roads took up the hue and cry. They called for the tapeline too. They would not pay their accounts until he could show a certified mileage slip. First and last I reckon he must have lost a thousand dollars. Oh, she is a caution! I'd like to see any man get the best of her," Mrs. Tinkham concluded with a laugh.



## CHAPTER XIII

The next day after lunch I set out on foot to keep my engagement with Mrs. Broadwick.

The day was cold and clear. I wore a short brown-and-tangerine plaid skirt, a burnt-brown sweater, a close-fitting brown velvet hat with a rolled, stitched brim, golf stockings and shoes to match.

Mrs. Broadwick lived on the Cameron road beyond Big Woods. I decided to go by Redfields station rather than take the nearer way through the fields across the river bridge which led past Black Manson's cabin. I would be innocent of this more convenient road. Still one could not be sure whom one might meet on the public highway. In view of this possibility I went back to the mirror, cocked my hat a trifle more to one side and let more truant red hair escape over my ear on the other side. We do that sometimes, the best, most modest women. We dare not take a chance, but if, by one of those subtler providences which has nothing to do with our heavenly fortunes, an opportunity opens we try to be prepared to meet it with flying feathers and becoming colors.

I had seen Black Manson only once since the

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

August storm; then at a cool distance. I had been coming out of Tinkham's store as he approached one afternoon. I furnished the coolness and he kept his distance. I caught his eye, let it go as if this were the eye of an enemy, inclined my head in the briefest possible acknowledgment of our acquaintance. He lifted his hat and changed his direction, striding towards Winch's shop, though he had been coming to the store. I was also conscious of a smile somewhere on his face. It may have been a twitch about the corners of his mouth or the flash of his black eyes. Certainly I felt a stroke of humor fall upon me as I passed.

I stopped at Tinkham's store to mail a letter and hurried out, wondering idly what Mrs. Tinkham would say when she discovered that the correspondence between Oliver and me had ended. Oliver was already like one of those fading markers left behind in my purely romantic career. I experienced the pleasant excitement a woman always feels when she is in the position to assume the risks of another romance. It cannot be avoided, this high anticipation in the heart of a woman. No matter how earnestly she devotes her energies to the sterner duties of life she will scan the horizon for another lover.



## PART FIVE

### CHAPTER XIV

I came to that part of the road on the edge of Big Woods on the opposite side from Redfields. The wind was blowing but not steadily. It flew up now and then, and with every gust the leaves rose like red-and-golden shadows in the sunlight. They whirled and capered; then when the wind slipped from beneath them they floated down into drifts like rolls of flowered tapestry. My feet rustled them, making a crisp, silken sound. The odor of them filled my nostrils, sweet and pungent.

We have instincts which lie dormant a thousand years, the mere rudiments of faculties we had in the beginning. They never develop. They remain instincts. Nature keeps us provided for that primitive life to which we may return. When we least expect it, on a street, in a crowd, sitting side by side with a stranger—or the man you love—one of these little fox-eared instincts will suddenly jump up in your well-ordered rational mind and say “Look out!” Then if you are a financier you call it a hunch and you do not invest in the securities you



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

were about to buy. If you are a criminal you duck your head and disappear. If you are a woman you get up and change your seat. You do, even if the man beside you is your husband who has sworn to love and cherish you. And you do not know why you do this. The more so because the next moment the sensation has passed and you go back and sit even nearer to him than you were before, being contrite, amazed at this shock of fear or doubt. But you had it! Just so, now, at the bottom of a hill, something, a sound, the breaking of a twig, some movement in the woods, attracted my attention. I halted, making my feet very still in the leaves. I stood listening. This was not a sound. There were too many singing, fluttering, chirruping noises all about me. It was a feeling which startled me like a whisper when no one is near to whisper. I looked up and down the road. No one, nothing in sight that could account for this strange prescience. My gaze went deep into the woods, very dark here between the breasts of the hills, and damp. Mushrooms stood all about like parasols with vivid red-and-black stems, some of them tilted, showing taupe and pink and yellow plaiting beneath: Fungus flowers in a black bowl of the earth, shaded by tall trees, rimmed with ferns. Very pretty, I thought, and caught sight of a narrow path showing like a brown seam—so straight it was, merely touching the

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

edge of this hollow—smooth and hard on the hill-side.

All paths are seductive. They are little tunes that catch your feet. I had no intention of taking this one, knowing that it must lead to the Manson place; but my eye trailed it, resting here and there upon some splash of color, a yellow ruffle of fungus tipped with red upon a fallen tree. Just beyond there was a stone, leaning, not distinct but half concealed by the bolls of nearer trees. It made a dull blue shade against which the fungus glowed. I moved idly a few paces along the path, meaning to turn back when I had a closer view. Then I halted, flung up my hands with some sort of exclamation. The stone moved, sat up straighter. I saw that this was a woman crouching there.

She sprang to her feet and turned her face to me—a little drawn white face with puckered lips, tear-stained, ringlets of dark hair falling about it disheveled.

“Bonnie Armstead!” I cried. “How you frightened me!”

Her lips moved, widened to a smile. Then the line broke, the corners went down, quivering. Her eyes searched me, half fearful, but with a spark in them.

“I saw you coming along the road,” she began plaintively. “And I dropped down here until you

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

should have passed. What was the harm?" raising her voice.

"No harm, dear," I returned, advancing.

She drew back, put out her hand as if I were a blow against which she defended herself.

"I didn't want to be seen! But you did not go past! You came in here!" she exclaimed, her eyes wide and accusative.

I regarded her. Thoughts unthinkable crowded in the wildest confusion through my mind.

"Why did you come?" she demanded. "Where were you going?"

I felt the red flare of anger rush over me.

"I was on my way to see Mrs. Broadwick," I answered coolly.

"Not by this path! You know where it leads," she cried.

I turned on my heels.

There was a quick step, and she had me by the sleeve. She was trembling. There was such a look of futile anguish upon her face as one sees on the pale pictures of the damned.

"Nancy!" she whispered, "I know. I know by myself," beating her breast softly with the other hand. "Don't go near that man. He is terrible. He has a wisdom of us. He will not love, but what contempt! It is like a curse!"

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I undid her fingers from my sleeve, looking the other way.

“You are good. I know. I can tell! There is no secret knowledge in your face, no fear like mine! You see what I am—all fears, the ghost of every shame. You get like that. You keep wishing for something. And you never can have it. No man will give it to you, the thing you want—love! Not after you have paid somewhere for love. They laugh. They cast their eyes like pitiless swords at you. So have I died a thousand times by the sword, Nancy. Or they are like him. At first when he came here he was kind to me with a fine respect. It was as if he restored my honor. I was careful; I felt like a good girl again. Then—you know—he must have heard something.”

She had been leaning sidewise, trying to catch my averted eyes. Now she closed her own, and I looked at her. It was the face of a woman whom death has not delivered from pain.

“I was not particular,” she began again, opening her eyes beseechingly. “You can’t be afterwards. I did everything; letters, I wrote so many letters to him! At last I made some excuse to go over there. As you are doing now. You have some explanation. Maybe business. You try to deceive yourself with that. Well, he will not believe you, Nancy! He



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

—he is used to us—our ways!” she cried, dropping in a little heap upon the ground and covering her face with her hands.

“Bonnie!” I exclaimed in deep disgust. “You do not, you cannot mean what you are saying—to *me!*”

She looked up at me cunningly as if she heard the tinkle of her own lies. It was horrible, but I controlled myself. I felt obliged to leave no doubt of me in a mind so soiled.

“I am on my way to see Mrs. Broadwick. I saw these mushrooms as I passed and came in here for a moment to look at this one,” indicating the yellow mass on the log. “I had no thought of—”

“You do not love him then?” she asked.

“I scarcely know him. I have every reason to dislike him, on account of the advantage he took of father in business. I almost hate him.”

“Ah, yes, that makes no difference. Look at me!” she said. “I do hate him. I could kill him with these hands!” locking her fingers together.

“You are morbid,” I returned.

“You are sure you do not love him?” she insisted.

“Don’t ask me such a question. Why should you dare think of it?”

“I don’t know. It is a feeling. And I saw you on the bridge with him that day,” regarding me keenly.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“What day?” I demanded, blushing.

“The day of the storm. I was there too. I was waiting for him. I meant to speak to him. Then you came. I could not hear, but I saw you, Nancy. The way you looked. Another woman knows. Then the storm came. I nearly died. I was nearer the river, in the reeds. The worms crawled over me,” shuddering, “and I had to stay there until you were both gone.”

This was too much. I took a step, avoiding her.

“Wait, Nancy! I want to speak! Ah, I must. It is all in here,” pressing her hands against her breast.

“What is it?” I asked coldly.

“I have been good, except in this. It happened years ago, directly after you left Redfields. Since then it has been just one long hunger, not for love, but for what love could do for me. That I might look and feel as other women are. I have been so faithful in everything else. I have worked, at home, so hard. I have made a thousand sacrifices. And it was so long ago, years! Why do I feel so wicked? Why do not other sins damn us, only this one? And only us? And I do it to myself! I feel it. And no prayer can redeem me. I have prayed. It only makes you fit for death, not life, prayers do!” she concluded, regarding me woefully.

“I do not know why you tell me all this. You

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

do yourself no service. And it is perfectly horrible. I do not deserve to know such things!" I exclaimed.

"No," she agreed.

"I feel as if you had wronged me by these confidences."

"Yes, I understand. But I thought you might help me—tell me something that could help. You know the world. Maybe it is not so awful," she put in.

"It is not what you have done; it is *you* who are so awful," I cried.

"Yes, that's it," regarding me in some strange suspense.

"I know no remedy for that. And now I must go. Mrs. Broadwick is waiting for me," I said, moving off.

"And you do not love Black Manson?" catching my eye as I passed.

I made a gesture, sufficiently repellent to include everything. So I left her clinging to the ground, a fallen leaf among the fallen leaves, with that scarlet-tipped fungus glowing above her like the poisoned crown of dishonor.

I could not bear to think of Black Manson. Bonnie Armstead was like a moat filled with stagnant water that divided him from my thoughts. But a thousand other thoughts pursued me, as I hurried along the road in the bright sunshine, of

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

women I had known in New York, still brazenly self-respecting, and not so good as Bonnie Armstead, nor nearly so good. How was this? Was self-respect a kind of fierce courage all men had against their own vices—and some of these women I had known, and doubted?



## CHAPTER XV

"You are late, child," Mrs. Broadwick complained as I entered her room.

"I walked."

"And the wind has blown the color out of your cheeks! I thought you had such a good color yesterday."

It had been good enough until my encounter with Bonnie Armstead, I reflected. My mind was still sick at the stomach.

"Lay your things on the bed and take this chair," she said, watching me with a crooning eye.

"You don't mind my receiving you in here?" she went on. "I stay close and closer to my bed. I should never get over it if I died in the parlor. It is not a place where a woman of my size could give up her ghost comfortably."

"Don't think of it. You are looking so well," I laughed, dropping into the chair beside her.

"Well, you would think of it if you were in my place. I am nearly as old as your father."

I said that I could not believe that she was.

"And I have palpitation. Sometimes when it comes on I am so afraid I'll die sitting up, or out on

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

the back porch or in the parlor; not where one belongs then, in one's own bed!"

This was, I discovered, an obsession with her. She was not afraid of death, but of "making a scene," she said.

She sat in a straight chair, her knees wide apart.

"Do you know, I have not crossed my knees in years. It is a great privation not to be able to do so!" she said, smoothing her skirts over her enormous knees. She had the frankness of genius about everything.

"We are not supposed to cross them," I returned smiling.

"But we do if we can, surreptitiously anyhow."

Then she asked me to put a piece of pine under the fire. I did. The blaze leaped. We sat there in a sort of homely, bright silence. I was sure she was eager to begin whatever it was she had to say, but she lacked the circuitous manner of arriving gracefully at the point of contact. It was not for me to aid her. There was too much at stake. She looked ominous, like a conscientious committee about to do its duty.

"Nancy," she began at last in her deep kind voice, "you know that I loved your mother."

"Yes, dear Mrs. Broadwick," I answered.

"We were girls together. There was never anything between us but your father."

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“Father?” I wanted to know.

“Yes, he was very much in love with me then.”

This was news. My impression had always been that father carried an animus against Mrs. Broadwick like a concealed weapon which he dared not use.

“I was a handsome girl,” she went on simply, “but wilful. So was Kedic McPherson. I loved him but I could not endure him. He loved me, but he resented me more than any other living person, I do believe, and does to this day,” smiling grimly.

“We were never engaged, but—I might have married him—and been your mother. In that case I doubt if you would have been a daughter. And you certainly should not have had that McPherson hair and skin! Then he fell in love with your mother and married her. She was pretty, and so gentle. The very woman for him, but I doubt, Nancy, I doubt very much if your father ever had the least talent for making a woman happy. So I did what I could for her. I never loved any one as I did your mother.” She sighed.

“I had already married Mr. Broadwick. He was a good man.”

Her tone, complacent, without even the enthusiasm of a widow's grief, was enough to make him turn over in his grave. I remembered him

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

dimly as a small thin man who wore a yellow spade-shaped beard and the perpetual twinkle of a smile in his blue eyes. He had gone to his reward many years ago, leaving Mrs. Broadwick an efficient widow in comfortable circumstances. She was the kind of woman who would meddle with her circumstances however comfortable. She had improved them by means of the double-fisted methods she employed in managing her farm. So many very intelligent women I have known had the wisdom to conceal their wit. Mrs. Broadwick was the other kind. She had a brain that bristled. She vaunted it impudently. She acted according to her own judgment, no matter what the judgment or custom of her neighbors was. She was vehement intellectually, and she was formidable.

Some such trails of thought passed through my mind as I listened to her now.

"So you see, I have an interest, if not a claim on you," she was saying.

I was not so sure. Let her declare the nature of this mortgage, I decided, bowing amiably to her at the same time.

"It is natural then that I should be concerned for you in your present situation; it is very grave," she said.

"Yes," I admitted, "but I am determined not to worry."



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“Well said, but it shows your ignorance of yourself. Women live by worrying.”

I laughed. “You do not compliment us.”

“I am truthful,” she said, and took me squarely with a look that surpassed inquisitiveness as the Inquisition surpassed the confessional.

“Are you contemplating marriage?”

“No, indeed,” I cried, laughing again. “Why did you think of that?”

“Well, it is the romantic way women have of side-stepping their worries—and multiplying their responsibilities.”

“I have no thought of marriage,” I assured her.

“But there was a young man here to see you this week.”

“Oh, Oliver Winchell, yes; I knew him in New York,” I admitted, coloring.

“But you have refused him?” observing this color.

“Really there is nothing between us, only a pleasant friendship,” I answered, endeavoring to conceal my annoyance behind a forced laugh.

“I am relieved,” she said, leaning back. “You should marry, my dear. It is the quickest way out of any kind of situation for a woman if she is not already married. But I should not like to see you marry a Northern man.”

“Why?”

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“Well, it is something like marrying a foreigner. They are good people but not our kind. I do not say that they are inferior; far from it. But they lack elasticity. If you ask me I should say they are trained out of their natural attributes. They learn their very emotions. They are horribly efficient, Nancy,” wagging her head wisely in reply to my shriek of laughter.

“Yankees, my dear,” she went on, “perform the great menial tasks of our civilization. They have cold-weather energy all the year round and their imagination for financial affairs is sublime. They have the industrial temperament. It is a fearful thing! And they never cease to be sensible. Think of being married to a man who applied his mind to you in all the intimate domestic relations. Their own women stand it because they are inured—to that sort of thing. But you, any woman of us, would feel the frost of such a husband. It produces a sort of rigidity of the affections. You couldn’t be happy, no matter how merely good he was to you. That goodness would be exactly like the allowance he made you for household expenses; sufficient, maybe generous, but no more. You would be obliged to make it do. Well, you could get no more love from him than that, even if you wanted a lot more for some emergency of your woman’s nature.”

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"But I have known—I have seen the happiest marriages," I interrupted.

"Don't talk to me, Nancy," she came back, lifting her fat, red hand warningly.

"You don't know anything about a marriage from looking at it on the outside. I had a cousin who married a Northern man. It looked like an ideal union. She had a fine house, nice children. Those children spoke grammatically from their birth! They could think, too, at an early age, use their little minds like a pair of scissors—born trained animals, you see! Well, she got the feeling of what had happened to her at last—not a thing to complain of, you understand. Her husband was an excellent man and did his duty by her as carefully as he kept his accounts in business. Well, do you know what she told me one day?"

"I can't imagine!"

"She told me she wanted to throw herself out of the upstairs window!" she announced, glaring at me.

"Morbid!" I returned.

"Yes, the poor thing got hysterics from having life and love measured out to her according to arithmetic, and the condition of the markets and the science of health."

"What happened?" I asked.

"Her husband died, fortunately; she relaxed, quit

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

bringing up her children by a code, and some of them recovered. They did very well." She spoke with a sort of mild satisfaction. And I perceived that she had not meant this for wit or sarcasm.

"You are all wrong about Northern men as husbands—for Southern women," I told her, "but you need have no anxiety about me. I shall never marry."

"What will you do then? Go on with your literary work?"

"I have abandoned that."

"You could and no great harm done to the world," she agreed coolly, "but what then will you do?"

There was such undisguised concern in her great homely face that I could not resent this question.

"I shall not go back to New York, ever," I began, looking into the fire at this prospect. "I—shall take charge of Redfields plantation—live there, you know," I concluded vaguely.

"Now, Nancy," she began, leaning forward and speaking so earnestly that she startled me, "this is why I wanted to see you, talk to you—warn you. I was afraid you were about to make a mistake. I am glad it is not marrying the wrong man. But this is even worse, if possible!"

"It is my duty."

"It is never a woman's duty to make a fool of herself!"



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Doctor Fosberry believes that I can save the place. He knows the situation, and he has confidence in my ability to do it," I told her.

"My dear, because that old man thinks he escorted you into the world is no reason why he is fit to guide you through it. I have known Calvin Fosberry since he was a boy, and I can tell you he has no practical sense about anything but pills and livers! He has made a fortune and spent the last dollar of it on that old place he inherited from his father, and now the land is so run down peas grunt when they sprout in his field!"

I listened politely, wondering how people lived by human advice and realizing how subject by nature and tradition women are to it.

Mrs. Broadwick squared herself, placed a hand on each knee, turned her old mottled face to me, pulled down the corners of her mouth, fixed her heavy blue eyes upon me and sighed.

"Look at me, Nancy. Just look at me!" she commanded.

"And to think that I was once a lady," she added dolorously.

"Dear Mrs. Broadwick!" I protested.

"I had fine manners and fine clothes and a waist-line," she went on. "I could talk about other things besides crops. I was fond of music. I read novels and crocheted trimming for my petticoats. I sang

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

in the choir and wore pretty shoes. I had all those endearing vanities that make a woman attractive. Ask Dr. Fosberry. He remembers me as I was then. And Kedic McPherson has not forgotten. That is why he cannot endure me now, nor at any time these last thirty years. Because I am so different in every way from the slim, laughing, spirited woman I was!"

She leaned back, closed her eyes, bunched her brows in a heavy frown, puckered her lips, let her chin quiver and sniffed. Then she felt for her handkerchief, blew her nose violently, wiped it this way and that fiercely as if she despised her nose, and glared at me through tears.

"And do you know how it all happened?" she demanded.

Her diet, I suspected, had much to do with her present appearance, but this was not the answer to make.

"For more than thirty years, Nancy, I have managed this farm," she began. "I have given my life to just a piece of land. I have cared for it in all weathers. I have become a termagant trying to protect it. I have lost my temper forever. I have got rheumatism and hyperæmia doing my duty to this land! My color begins to rise in March when the plows start and it never cools, my face does not, until the last wisp of hay is in, the last lock of

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

cotton ginned and every nubbin of corn in the crib!

"It takes that, my dear, to manage a farm—high color, high voice and a fighting eye."

"You do yourself an injustice," I cried, reaching over to pat her hand soothingly. "You have made a splendid success. Every one admires you."

"Yes, but I don't admire myself. And who can love me? If I had sold the place, invested the money and taken care of myself I should have been an elegant old woman now with a smooth skin and my hair crimped. I might even have married and had a family! At my age you will miss that more than anything; nobody of your own flesh and blood to honor you and love you," she concluded, sighing.

"Some morning when Tim comes in to make the fire he will find me rumped up here in this chair, dead! That's how it will end for me!"

"Oh, no!" I entreated.

"And you can't know the sacrifices I have made for this land. I have never had a tenant. Tenants are to land what boll weevils are to cotton. They eat it up. You lease it for a year and they take three years' life out of it making that one crop. Then they leave and go somewhere else to murder the land. I had a mind to all that. I have always hired labor and managed the place myself. And I know by a lifetime's hardships how exacting the land is. It wears you out; nothing is left of you."

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“But so much courage and honor,” I added gently.

“Oh, yes, I have my virtues and a comfortable income,” she returned, with a flash of humor. “But virtues in a woman, Nancy, are like her complexion; she must keep them soft and pretty. Mine have become as homely and harsh as—I am. And you do not know, my dear, how many times I have regretted my principle!”

I let out a shriek of laughter.

“Yes,” she insisted, smiling ruefully, “I am tired of being intelligent, efficient, conscientious and industrious. If I could only give up and lie on a couch in a fine silk something, and have hysterics like a woman, it would be such a relief. But I never can!”

“Be sensible, Nancy. Don’t give your life in vain. Exchange it for love, something that can talk back to you. The land never says ‘Thank you.’ A husband is often difficult, but there is not a thousand acres of him to be clothed and trained and kept and fed. Besides, you always have the satisfaction of knowing that you can flunk and leave him with the bag to hold until you feel better. He is bound to go on cherishing you, but the land will not. It has no responsibilities. You are responsible to it for every wash and flood that damages it.”

She went on in this vein until at last I promised



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

to think it over, merely to humor her. Then I got up to put on my things, saying that I must hurry home to father. I thought she still had a sort of memorial interest in father.

I was pinning my hat before the mirror when she surprised me with this:

“Do you know Mr. Manson, Nancy?”

“I have met him,” I answered coolly.

“He is a nice man.”

I could see her face in the mirror. She was watching me with a sort of secret attention as if she had one foot of her old setter mind raised, scenting my hidden thoughts.

I did not deny that Mr. Manson was a nice man, but I would not affirm that he was. My silence merely implied that whatever he was made no difference to me.

“He comes here very often. I like him.”

I snatched off my hat, gave the crown a punch, pulled down the brim and put it on again with the air of a woman who kicks the cat because she is displeased about something else.

“I want you to know him,” Mrs. Broadwick went on.

This was too much. The very name of him put me in pain where a woman cannot admit that she suffers.

“I know more of him now than I like,” I retorted.

# A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“What, for example?”

“He has got Big Woods and he hopes to get what remains of Redfields. But he never shall have it!” I exclaimed.

“So that is why you are putting up the fight to save the place.”

I stood with my chin up, buttoning my sweater.

“After all, that may not be such a bad idea,” she said after a pause.

I shot a glance at her. She was staring at the fire. Her whole expression had changed. It was that of one who hears news, digests it swiftly and wittily and finds it pleasant. The smile was concealed, but I felt that in her mere mind she was smiling with satisfaction.

I was irritated, not intelligently but emotionally. My color flamed when I bent to give her the faintest touch of a kiss and was caught for an instant by the calm blue omniscience of her gaze.

She wanted me to come again soon. I told her I would come. If I needed advice she would be glad to give it, she said. I told her how much I would appreciate her advice and hurried out.

I resisted the temptation to slam the front door, but when I was on the road again I unbuttoned my sweater. I was still warm with an inexplicable anger. What offended me was not the way she had discouraged me and advised against my wish to keep

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Redfields, but it was the sudden change in her mind toward this plan when she discovered my antagonism to Black Manson. Why that lean, keen speculative smile on her fat face as if she could foretell the conclusion of such a performance? She could not wish me to fail, once I was committed to the adventure. The old cat! She was thinking thoughts that did not belong to her. With that I clapped down some hatchway that led to my deeper mind where all the prophets of a woman's life dwell and work out her future for her long before she gets to the top, daytime knowledge of it herself. Mrs. Broadwick seemed to me now in some kind of telepathic communication with these inside prophets. Well, I concluded, walking faster, one could outdo her own fate in spite of prophets and meddlesome counselors. I was tired of being urged not to do what I was determined to do. If only the biographer of Job had smacked a damaging and critical Scripture onto his three discouraging friends that I might quote it to mine! In this connection I venture to add that many a man who gives sensible advice is no better than an obstructionist who wants you to take the road he took through life, which is bound to lead to the past and not into the future, where you belong. He jumps up before you just as you are getting up the right speed and shouts to you to go back, take the other road to the right.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

And if you are timid enough to fear your own predestined future you do turn back, take the other road, only to find another graybeard waving you down, telling you there is a bad place ahead, impassable. He wants you to turn back and take the road behind you to the right, you understand. So you spend your life going to the right in a circle, and you never get anywhere. This is my candid opinion of the worth of most people who are free with advice. I wonder if there is one successful man or woman who has not had similar experiences with them. They are frequently good teachers of morals, even when they have themselves been Solomons, but they are the least valorous leaders in this world to deeds that make the world live and shine.

The keen freshness of the wind which was blowing steadily now restored my good humor. There was no one in sight on this road. I had that personal private sense of liberty which we feel only when we think we are alone. I took off my hat. I felt a little like Cuthullen's daughter with all the younger locks of my hair flying in this wind. You must have observed this if you have seen much of women. The oppressed woman always binds her hair close and keeps her head covered. Hidden hair is a sign of bondage with them. But let any one of us have a sense of freedom, a fine emotion, a moment of high happiness, and the last one of us in-



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

stinctively gives our hair to the sun and the wind, as some birds sing only when their wings are spread. We may not do it, if you are present; but I say we wish to do it, especially if we have much hair, whether it is golden or the black veil of our fairness. So I walked briskly now, humming a quick little tune, feeling the wind pluck at the curls on my head.

Presently I came to a wider reef of leaves beside the road. I struck into them with trailing feet. I did a fancy step or two by the tune I was singing. I moved faster, whirling round and round until I was in the midst of a cone of flying leaves which trailed to the windward high above my head. Breathless at last, I stood watching them sail and fall. It was then, facing the way over which I had already come, that I caught sight of a man also standing still. At the same moment I saw him strike his hands together. The faint smacking sound of his applause reached me as I clapped my hat on, turned and started off. At first I walked sedately, not too fast, implying that whoever this was on the road behind me he should not have been there. He had eavesdropped my feet in those leaves. Then out of the startled confusion of my senses I recognized this man, who was too far away for his face to be more than a blur. But by his unusual height, by that singular lift of his head above the heavy

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

shoulders and long arms I knew that this must be Black Manson. My hope was that he had not recognized me. Still I became a fiery furnace of self-consciousness. My face flamed. I walked faster. If I kept ahead he would not know what girl this was making a fool of herself dancing on the public highway. I quickened my pace. Above everything I must not seem willing to be overtaken. I lengthened my stride and resisted the impulse to break into a run. My heart was pounding. He must know by the rate I was going that I wished to avoid him, I reflected breathlessly. He might be far in the rear by this time. If only I dared look back! And I did not dare. Then I heard the measured tread of feet behind me.

The next moment Black Manson passed, lifting his hat without a word or a glance, and went on with a long swinging stride twice the length of mine.

I halted, staring indignantly at his back. He was showing me the ease with which he could outdistance me; also letting me know that my haste was unwarranted vanity, since his purpose was not to overtake me but to pass me. I do think men, any man, have more ways of embarrassing or provoking a woman than the most perverse one of us alive!

Meanwhile my own mind went off like a rocket. It was imperative that I should discuss a certain

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

matter with Manson. Here was the opportunity afforded by chance, and I had behaved like a silly girl instead of a sensible business woman!

"Oh, Mr. Manson!" I called, hurrying after him.

He faced about suddenly as if he had been expecting to be hailed, and advanced to meet me.

"Ah, good afternoon, Miss McPherson! It is you. I was not sure," he said, regarding me with what I felt was a sort of malicious gravity.

"Yes," endeavoring to speak calmly in spite of being still practically breathless. "I have been wanting to see you—that is, I must see you on a matter of business," I stammered, furiously angry with myself for not being able to avoid the verb "to see" in this connection.

"What can I do for you?"

"Oh, nothing," I retorted quickly. "It is about the mortgage you hold on Redfields."

He regarded me with an impersonal business look, as much as to say, "Yes, he had the mortgage; what about it?"

"The interest, it was paid last year?" I asked, hoping against hope that it might have been paid.

"No, your father and I had an understanding about that. He needed the money, he said. Wanted to buy a tractor, I believe."

"Yes, he bought it," I returned dryly, remembering this tractor, standing now with a mass of huge

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

plows and harrows beneath the tool shed, which had proved an unprofitable investment because there was no one at Redfields who knew how to farm with a tractor.

"Well, the interest will be paid. This was what I wanted to tell you," I said.

We walked on in silence, coming down the hill at the bottom of which the path turned into the Big Woods where I had encountered Bonnie earlier in the afternoon.

"There may be some delay," I began again. "Father's illness—I am just now getting hold of things."

"I understand," he answered briefly.

"This year's interest will also be paid," I informed him.

I do not know if we have a purely animal instinct against the paying of interest, and probably taxes, or if I felt resentful because I was obliged to pay it to a man who, I felt, had wronged me; or if it was because he halted at the opening between the trees where the path began; but it is certain that I experienced at this moment a resentment keen as a pain that brings the blood to one's cheeks.

"It really makes no difference," he said. "The land, Redfields, will be good for the interest even if it is not paid at all when the mortgage is due at the end of another year."



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

His manner and tone had changed. He stood with his hat off, regarding me with the teasing sparkle in his eye a man shows only to a woman, not to another man with whom he does business however harshly.

"I shall be able by that time not only to take up the mortgage, but I expect to be in a position to recover Big Woods," I retorted, giving him a cat-spitting glance for his sparkle.

"It will not be for sale," he said with the wit of a smile deepening the lines about his mouth.

"Not for what it is really worth?"

"Not for any price—to you." He said this with a quick ferocity which was the more offensive because I felt that it was not an expression of enmity but the enigmatical triumph of a man who is determined to beat you in the game for the fun of the thing.

I stared at him. He returned this look mildly, dropped his eyes with a sort of increased interest to my hands. I realized only then that they were clinched fists. If I am deeply moved I must take refuge in either tears or laughter.

"Oh, I wish you were dead, I cannot bear you!" I cried, turning and starting off before these tears betrayed me, leaving Black Manson standing bare-headed, smiling in the polite attitude of bowing like a man who has just received a gratifying confidence.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

It is not the thoughts we think, nor any deed we do, however regrettable, but it is some feeling we have, strong and involuntary, that humbles us most in secret. I suffered some such defeat as this, bitterer to bear than all the vicissitudes I faced in the undertaking before me.

## CHAPTER XVI

More than a thousand acres remained of Redfields plantation. At the prices land sold that summer in McPherson County I knew the place must be worth near three hundred thousand dollars. My confidence in the future was based upon that most ephemeral of all things, a land boom. Nothing should be easier, I believed, than to borrow what I needed to pay the interest on the mortgage and finance the place another year.

But when I went into the markets about the middle of October to negotiate for the relatively modest sum of fifteen thousand dollars it was not to be had. In the first place nobody would lend on a second mortgage; not even the Federal Land Banks. In the second place the land boom was gone. Now land could not be sold at any reasonable price. Money was "tight," I was told. Only the lawyers now were doing a thriving business in bankruptcy cases resulting from the inflated sales earlier in the summer, because with the failure of the crops and the hoarding of money and the general unrest, these men who had purchased land could not meet their obligations. Merchants, pressed to pay their accounts with the brokers and wholesale com-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

panies, in turn pressed and sued the farmers who were unable to pay their bills. The thousand dollars I had deposited in Cameron barely met the more urgent demands of father's creditors for supplies bought during the year.

There is no valor like the valor of ignorance. Now, with a sinking knowledge of my financial condition and without being able either to borrow or obtain credit, my courage failed me. I had visions of being sued by a certain importunate fertilizer company. I was in the midst of a personally conducted panic, keeping up a brave front only because I would not add humiliation to my anxieties by confessing defeat.

One day late in this same month of October I received a letter from Katherine Lock. I had known her in New York as a young, ambitious art student who had no talent and plenty of money. She paid her way handsomely in our set with delightful little dinners. She had no judgment about literature, art or music. She liked everything written, painted or sung by any of us. She was amusingly popular. And for many of us it was a sort of financial tragedy when she married Hamilton Lock, a young industrial engineer "with a future." But we admitted that this was the only sensible thing she had ever done.

I had had occasional letters from her during the



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

three years that had passed since her marriage, always from a different part of the country, where her husband had taken a contract for some industrial corporation—usually somewhere in the Far West. This letter, however, came from Atlanta.

She wrote that they had been there for nearly a year where Mr. Lock had a position with a company salvaging one of the great government war plants built to make powder, but that they would leave soon for Arkansas. "Hamilton has discovered something perfectly wonderful and is going into business for himself," she explained. And it was a settled fact that he could not fail to make his fortune within a year or two.

After giving this sketch of her present happiness and future anticipations with which her letters invariably began, she said that "poor Oliver" had called to see them on his way back to New York, else she should not have known that I had returned to Redfields. I inferred from the "poor Oliver" tone of this sentence that he had confided in her, probably from force of habit. We all did. And so she was writing to ask me to come to her for the following week-end.

"You need the change, my dear," she concluded, "and it would be simply wonderful to have you. We are giving a little dinner at the club Saturday evening. There is always dancing afterwards.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

From what Oliver tells me it will do you good to dance. I remember how you loved it. Besides, we shall have another guest that evening, an old college mate of Hamilton's. He is just crazy to meet you. Not that that makes any difference to you. If you have refused Oliver you must have taken vows to remain a spinster—but I do want this man to meet you, if only to verify some of the fine tales we have been telling him about you. And you might take one more fling, dear Nancy, if it is true what Oliver tells us about the way you plan to sacrifice your life, your beauty and your complexion to farm Redfields plantation! I will not tell you the name of the victim I am offering you. But he is fearfully rich, a bachelor, and the most magnificent-looking man you ever saw. He is a Virginian really. But ten years ago he sold his estate there, came to New York and made a fortune in real estate. When we entered the war he closed up his business, obtained a commission as captain in the army and saw service in France. When he came home things were so unsettled, income taxes, that sort of thing discouraged him, he told Hamilton. He decided not to go back into business for a few years. He simply disappeared. And Hamilton had no idea what had become of him until they met quite by accident here in Atlanta this summer. Since then he comes in frequently for the week-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

end. But he will not tell us even yet where he lives; only that he has a country place in Georgia and may never go back to New York. Now doesn't all this sound interesting? Do send me a wire saying that you will come!"

I decided to accept this invitation, inspired by the same spirit of desperation which sometimes drives a man to go on a spree when some of his foundations are slipping either in business or in his more intimate personal affairs. I must have a change of scene, if only for a day. My only objection to the invitation was that Katherine had padded it with this incredibly eligible bachelor. But she was incurably romantic and must always be doing Cupid's errands for him, a gratuitous service for which she was not always thanked.

## CHAPTER XVII

Katherine was the same slender, pretty little thing I remembered. She had autumnal coloring: dark hair, brown eyes, olive skin with a radiant flush. She is a sort of bead-bearing woman, as distinguished from other women who only wear beads. What I mean is that they seemed to grow on her, as brightly colored berries hang from shrubs in the autumn. She was inclined to skip when she walked, and she had the same mental habit when she talked, frisking from one topic to another, cheerfully incoherent, letting out little shrieks of laughter when there was barely enough amusement present to win a smile from duller, saner people.

She received me with all these pretty manners and noises when I arrived on an earlier train than she had expected me.

“Nancy!” she cried, embracing me and then inspecting me, still swinging to me by my hands. “What have you been doing to yourself! You are younger, positively girlish, thin! I was so anxious after what Oliver told me.”

I did not ask her what Oliver had said, following



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

her to the room I was to have and allowing her to help me take off my wraps. When I removed my hat she shrieked.

“What have you been doing to your hair? It is lighter, like red gold,” she cried.

“I have been burning it going bareheaded in the sun,” I told her, flushing.

“And what an accommodating complexion you have. Really, Nancy, you do look fresh!” she added, noticing this color.

I was pleased, stimulated from having gone so long without the pretty speeches of the world. Nature pays no compliments. I had grown modest, sensitive to praise, during these last anxious, silent months at Redfields.

We had lunch together. Katherine wanted to know delicately, as she was uncertain whether she touched a wound or a sword, whether it really was “all off” between Oliver and me. I said it was.

“You no longer love him, or did you quarrel?”

“We did not quarrel and I no longer even like him,” I replied.

She regarded me with a sort of enterprising “well then” expression and began to extol the “wonderful man” who was so anxious to meet me.

“He is positively formidable, he is so good-looking. And such repose of manner! You will know at a glance that he is really somebody. And isn’t it

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

mysterious that he will not tell where he lives. Even Hammie doesn't know."

I told her I thought it was more than mysterious—doubtful.

"Oh no, there is nothing doubtful about—"

She clapped a hand over her mouth and giggled.

"I nearly called his name," she exclaimed, "and I promised I would not do that."

"Whom did you promise?"

"The man himself," she admitted, then seeing possibly a trace of irritation I felt at being thrust into what appeared to be a sillily sentimental situation, she added hastily: "But he is the finest ever, Nancy. Hammie has known him for years; only a bit queer, I imagine."

"He may as well remain incognito, so far as I am concerned."

"Well, of course, he does not know you; only your name and the things I told him. He is very much interested. He asks the funniest questions; whether I remembered if you cried easily. I told him certainly not, that you always made the other fellow cry. And if you were very intelligent about business. Wasn't that absurd? I told him that you had no sense at all except romantic sense and a woman's shrewdness in dealing with lovers."

"Oh, you told him that!" I complained.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Of course. I didn't want him to think he was going to meet a flapper."

"Well, it doesn't matter, except that I am sorry you have gossiped about my past," I said.

"Your past, Nancy!"

"Because I am no longer interested in—men."

"My goodness!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands and staring at me. Then she threw her head back and laughed.

"Tell that to some one who does not know you," she cried. "You could no more give up men, taking lovers as you go, than you could change the color and candor of your singing blue eyes or take the curl out of your hair!"

"Now tell me about this discovery Mr. Lock has made," I said, determined to change the subject. "Or is it a secret?"

"Yes, it is a secret in a way. So of course Hammie would never tell me. But it has to do with the potato."

I could not associate an industrial engineer with this menial vegetable. But I concealed my disappointment and asked her which potato.

"Sweet," she informed me.

"You know," she went on with a serious air, "the sweet potato as a food product is not valuable because it is so sensitive to cold, cannot be kept in condition for the markets. Well, Hammie has dis-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

covered a process by which they may be kept indefinitely."

"The Government has long advocated dehydrated sweet potatoes," I returned dryly.

"Oh, dried sweet potatoes, you mean," she exclaimed scornfully. "This is entirely different, Nancy. That is the marvel of it. By Hammie's process you can cure sweet potatoes, as they are, sweet and juicy, in four days, and in three weeks they are ready for the markets. You can ship them over land anywhere, across seas and they will not spoil. You can cure a hundred thousand bushels in one drying house and sell them in carload lots to brokers all winter."

I had my doubts and showed that I did.

"Oh, Hammie has proved it. He sent potatoes to France last winter. They arrived in perfect condition. Think of what that means. Cheaper food for poor people everywhere, and such good food. Suppose he had them to ship this year to Russia! It is a sure thing. The brokers are convinced. They are clamoring for Hammie's potatoes. Next year he will have hundreds of thousands of bushels for the markets. They are building the curing houses in Arkansas now. And turning the land, five hundred acres this year, more next year. There will be hundreds of thousands of bushels. We shall be rich, I tell you."



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I said I hoped so.

“You should hear Hammie talk about it. He will tell you everything except how he cures them. I know this much: It costs fifty cents to produce a bushel of sweet potatoes and get it to the market. They sell for from a dollar and fifty to five dollars a bushel according to the season. And you can raise from three hundred to six hundred bushels on an acre of suitable land. Just count it for yourself, what the profits would be on only a hundred acres. I can’t do so large a sum in my head. And no investment of capital after the first year when he must build his curing plant.”

I should have been more impressed with this fairy tale of fortune in the sweet potato if a man had told it, but coming from the pretty pink lips of Katherine it sounded absurd.

She said we must go downtown and do some shopping now. It would do me good to see the busy streets, and the pretty things. And would I mind waiting while she had her hair dressed? She had an engagement for that afternoon at four o’clock. So we went in Katherine’s fine car. And it was refreshing—the stirring crowds on the pavements, the displays in the shop windows; but for some reason I felt strangely removed from all this noise and bustle, as if far within a silence had settled upon me. Also, my mind continually reverted to

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

this plan for preserving and marketing sweet potatoes. While I sat in the car waiting for Katherine at the hairdresser's I thought about what might be done in this way at Redfields. That hundred acres of cotton land around the station. I had often heard father say it would produce wonderful potatoes. When you are in desperate straits financially you are ready to consider any proposition, whatever the risk. I resolved to draw Hamilton Lock out on this potato business. Not once during the afternoon did my mind revert to the mysterious man I was to meet that evening at dinner. And when we came home at six o'clock I had time only to exchange greetings with Mr. Lock before Katherine whisked me off to dress for this dinner.



## PART SIX

### CHAPTER XVIII

I do not claim that every woman is an artist; far from it. But every one of them is born with some kind of artistic instinct, even if it is a barbaric instinct, for dressing herself when the occasion appeals to her vanity. But the more she becomes involved with the plain elemental virtues, duties and anxieties of life the less assertive this instinct becomes. I have known brilliant leaders among women who kept their personal vanities well nourished to the last with elegant and tasteful toilets, and who died with their hair curled, because this grooming was essential to the position they held in society or on the rostrum of our recent political and public affairs. But I have yet to see the mistress of a home and the mother of children who is not comfortably divorced from her duties by servants and a nurse that retained an ardent interest in her mere clothes or her personal appearance. Her vanities change to a sort of sacrificial pride in her home and family. If one of us gets a serious ambition to achieve some success that depends upon our own work, it



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

invariably destroys these lighter feminine vanities. This is why a certain distinguished woman writer in this country looks like a frump, although she can dress the heroine of her story as thrillingly as if she employed a Parisian modiste for this business. And half a million women will bear me witness that a woman may become the controlling factor in the whole Federation of Women's Clubs in this country who always appears dressed like an Irish cook on her afternoon out.

I suppose some such evolution of vanity was already taking place in me. For I took no more time to make a toilet for this dinner with the Locks than I took any busy day at Redfields. What I mean is that I was not provocatively and femininely interested in myself. While I brushed and braided my hair—binding it close to my head as usual—my thoughts reverted constantly to the problems that faced me at Redfields. How could I possibly obtain the money to pay the interest due on the mortgage? What plan could be made for the coming year that would require the least possible capital?

In this mood I put on the frock I was to wear that evening. It belonged to the dinner-gown period of my career in New York, but it was a demure little gown, of palest apple-green satin, draped in the thinnest web of lace, edged and spangled with tiny iridescent beads. The bodice was cut low, and

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I wore an old cameo with the white-veiled head of a Madonna on it raised above the pink shell. The skirt was short and pouched at the bottom, but it was not so discourteously brief as skirts became later, showing only the slender inches of my ankles in pale gossamer green stockings above silver slippers.

I was standing before the fire drawing on a pair of long gloves when Katherine called to me from the hall:

"Are you ready, Nancy?" and whisked in before I had time to answer.

"Oh, you precious, lovely thing!" she cried. "Where did you get that frock? Not here!"

"No, it is one of Lucile's models; old now," I answered.

"Well, it is sweet. The lace is like a cobweb with the dew on it spun over young green leaves," she said, advancing to make a closer inspection.

"But I must say you are bolder than the rest of us," she laughed with her eyes raised now to my face.

"How, bold?" I wanted to know.

"We rouge. All of us do. And you have not rouged. It is like not putting on all your clothes—noticeable," she explained.

"Still, I shall not rouge," I announced.

"Oh, you do not need it now. Really you do

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

not, with that fresh color of your own. The question is, will it last through the evening. I should be as pale as a ghost," she explained anxiously, meaning that this evening would be no time to fade.

An hour later we joined that garland of women always to be seen ascending and descending the broad staircase of a fashionable city club at the dinner hour. Katherine scanned the groups of men standing below.

"Hammie promised to wait for us at the bottom of the stairs, and I don't see him," she murmured querulously.

"Ah, there they are," she exclaimed, as we reached the last step.

"Where?" I asked, casting a glance around.

"The two men standing beside the pillar to the left. The very tall one has his back turned this way—ah, Hammie sees us."

I had one glimpse of Lock advancing to meet us as my eyes passed him and rested upon the man who accompanied him. At the same moment my heart plunged and went over a precipice somewhere inside me. It was an act of dizzy courage to take without wavering the lightning stroke of a smile that flashed in the eyes and across the face of this man and then disappeared as they came nearer.

Lock made a signal to his wife, evidently in re-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

gard to the table he had chosen in an alcove on the other side of the room. She hurried forward to pass judgment on whether this was the most desirable table available, at the same time putting out her hand in friendly welcome to her other guest. Then the three of them came back to me.

"Nancy," Katherine chirruped, "I want to present Mr. Manson. Miss McPherson, Black," she added with a pretty, intimate air of triumph.

There was a pause so brief as not to be observed by our hosts, during which I read and answered the question in Black Manson's eye: "Shall we confess and turn the laugh on them?"

"I never knew you," was the meaning of my coolly polite stare.

"Very well then," he seemed to say with the bow he made, which was the only part of this conversation witnessed by the Locks. Then we made the usual responses from the ritual of polite manners to each other.

"Now you two come along," Hamilton Lock interrupted. "There has been a mistake about the tables. Another party has the one I reserved. We must hurry if we get this one. I am taking it from another fellow who ordered it for half past seven. He is late. But if he comes in before we get it we may be obliged to wait. Lot of people dining here to-night."



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

All this flung back over his shoulder as we followed slowly through the gathering crowd.

I was too experienced not to know that our passage attracted attention. My escort not only towered head and shoulders above everybody else; he was also the most distinguished-looking man in the room. And I at least was a stranger worth the interest of a glance, walking beside him with my gaze held straight before me, feeling the color deepening in my cheeks as I became angrily aware of being studied from above, so to speak, by the turn of Manson's head and the bending of his eyes upon me.

Presently we halted, waiting for the Locks, who were being detained by some people.

"Do you mind so much?" Black Manson asked in an undertone.

"It was a trick of course," I returned coolly. "Katherine should have told me."

"She did not know—that is, she did not know—"

"She is always innocent of her worst deed," I interrupted.

"She really is, this time," he insisted and went on smiling, "I have known the Locks a long time. When I am in town I usually see them. One evening two weeks ago they had dinner with me here at the club. Katherine was vastly excited—you know how she is. She had just heard, she said, that Nancy McPherson was at Redfields. Followed a

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

reel of gossip about you, very charming, very interesting. I did not tell her that I was, topographically speaking, your nearest neighbor. She was planning to have you up for this week-end."

He glanced at me and hesitated, offering a sort of apologetic smile which was also sneakingly mischievous.

"Well?" in a tone meant to be unfavorable.

"I intimated that I expected to be in town that week-end," he admitted.

"She took the hint and extended me this invitation. That is all, except that I suggested she should not mention me to you. It was my only chance to meet you on neutral ground," he concluded.

We moved off again in the wake of the Locks, who had at last escaped their friends. I did not tell him that he had been the chief topic of Katherine's letter, that she had enhanced him with mystery and endowed him with every attribute that appeals to a woman's fancy. I was merely thinking angrily how mischievously romantic she had been at my expense.

She and Lock were now waiting for us with four other people.

"This is at least a truce?" my escort entreated hurriedly.

"Oh, it must be under the circumstances," I agreed in the armistice tone of cruelly polite society.

The next moment we were being introduced to

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

the other guests invited to this dinner party. It was characteristic of Katherine not to tell me she was entertaining six people instead of two. And I was left to discover during the evening that they were local celebrities. Mr. Walton was an official in the Federal Loan Bank. His wife was a prominent club woman. Whitsett was an editorial writer on one of the papers. And Miss Redmond had long since seen her best days as a beauty and was now going in for dramatic readings, which probably accounted for the mixture of tragic and lyrical lines in her small withered face.

When we were seated at the table the usual unconscious mental wrestling began among the guests, while the host and hostess urged each competitor on, inspired by the fear that a silence might fall and this become one of those terrible things, a dull dinner party. Mrs. Walton had just returned from a meeting of the state federation. And she was determined to tell what women were doing and planning to do, which for some reason is never interesting information unless you are interested in feminine politics. But Lock, who had her on his right hand, professed to be tremendously impressed by these activities. I heard him tell her that he had no doubt in time women would control political affairs in this country as they were now responsible for its domestic health and happiness. "Politics is

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

simply housekeeping on a national scale," he said. She accepted this flattery without considering that almost any well-bred man at the head of his own table will perjure himself to the wind in a woman's sails. Walton was discussing duck shooting with Katherine. He was a plain man with no attributes; merely hard-earned business qualifications which had made him rich and brought him into the mildly sporting element of society. Like so many men of his class he had taken up duck shooting late in life by way of acquiring correct material for polite conversation—as his wife had gone in for club work. The Redmond girl was telling Whitsett why she preferred popular audiences to parlor audiences.

"An art which depends upon emotional expression, as mine does, may be destroyed in a moment by a coldly critical atmosphere. And parlor audiences are very critical. I have died many times before a company of high-browed club women in somebody's drawing-room!"

"You don't tell me so," Whitsett returned solicitously.

"And I have lived with every atom of my being before a mixed audience of the common people, big rough man and plain woman," she added in deep-toned eloquence which caught the ears of the company. There was a slight inward chill of embarrassment, as always happens when a woman speaks



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

of her "being" even if she does not include "every atom of it." But a certain neurasthenic class of them will do it. This is a little queer when you consider that a man, even if he is a nervous wreck, never refers to his mere being. Still Whitsett made a mewling sound through his nose designed to express sympathy. But he was obviously straining at the leash in the effort to escape into the neighboring discussion of duck shooting. And Mrs. Walton, who had caught the comment on club women, snapped Miss Redmond a glance, as much as to say she would attend to her so soon as she had finished what she was saying to Mr. Lock.

Manson and I were without the substance from which open and aboveboard conversations are made. This became obvious to the other guests, as people on the bank may at the same moment see two swimmers about to sink. One after another they tossed us a line. Mrs. Walton fixed her fine rostrum eyes on me and asked if I had been drawn into the vortex of the feminist movement in New York. I told her no, that very few vortexes had ever appealed to me. There was a laugh, and having done her duty by me, she went back to her persecution of poor Lock. Then Walton caught Black Manson's eye and wanted to know if it was true that Mr. Manson had gone in seriously for farming.

"Well, not too seriously. I have simply changed

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

my scenes. Like country life. A man is never really a native of any land unless he owns some of it. Can't say I have gone further than that," he replied.

This led to a general discussion of what the psychological effects of owning land and property would have on the laboring class. Once they were in full cry, Manson deserted the pack and returned to me.

"Now that I have arrayed the classes against the masses, we may go on with what we were about to say," he began.

"But there is nothing we know or feel about which it is possible to talk—here," I returned, having already realized that this might make us the object of mischievous conjectures.

"On the contrary, we have burning interests in common," he retorted. "We have a quarrel to settle. Can anything be more intimate than that?"

"It cannot be settled here," I sent back evenly.

"If they only knew that you regard me as an enemy, what a sensational party this would be," he murmured under his breath.

"We know it," I replied, refusing to exchange a smile for the one he offered.

"We might keep the armistice so happily begun here. I would be a passionate pacifist with your permission."

"On your own terms, Mr. Manson!" I retorted.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“Yes, of course, but you might give me a chance to—present them.”

He was regarding me like a lover, and he was talking to me like a Shylock. He would make his own terms. Some unconfessed emotion seized me. I found myself sitting stiffly erect, my cheeks burning, tears tempting me. This would never do! If only some one would address a remark to me! If I might slip gracefully into the general conversation!

“Will you?” came Manson’s voice.

“I cannot imagine myself in a position where I could not make my own terms. Besides, is this the proper place to discuss business?” I answered.

“Business!” he repeated, as if the very word was incredible.

“Nancy! What mischief are you two plotting?” Katherine called out.

“We were not plotting anything good or bad,” Black Manson answered quickly. “I was just telling Miss McPherson about something that happened the other day.”

“He wants to tell all of us. He is bidding for an audience!” Lock complained.

“Did it happen to you, Mr. Manson?” the Redmond girl asked.

“In a way, yes,” he admitted.

“Well, let’s have it!” Lock grumbled, “but from the looks of Nancy, I doubt if you should be al-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

lowed to tell it. She was not pleased. She is not pleased now either. I know by the activity of her complexion. I move we leave it to Nancy. Are you willing that he should go on with what he was saying to you, or—”

“Really, I have no idea what Mr. Manson was going to say,” I interrupted.

“Oh, go on, Black,” Katherine put in.

“And make it snappy. We are long on ideas and short on human interest to-night. Have you had a desperate encounter with the hick or is it about one of the fair sex out there? Or, are they fair?”

“This one was. She was the fairest, loveliest thing I ever saw,” Manson replied.

“Sounds promising. Go to it, old man! Had you known her long, or was it love at first sight?”

“I leave you to be the judge of that,” he returned, laying down his salad fork and sweeping the company with an enigmatical smile, which merely grazed me in passing. Yet it conveyed a challenge.

“There is a forest on my place, skirted by the public highway,” he began. “We had an early frost this year, you know, and the leaves lie in long windrows beside this road. Pretty; looks like miles of glowing, rustling brocades rolled up. Well, one afternoon last week I was on my way home, walking. The weather was fine, keen wind blowing, sun shining, not a soul in sight. Then I heard some-



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

thing, like the sound of tearing silk. I came round a curve, and there, not twenty paces ahead, was—well, the living spirit of a May Day all toggled out in autumn colors!”

“The girl!” Katherine breathed ecstatically. .

“It was,” he nodded to her, “obviously a girl. What I had heard was the noise she made wading through those drifts of leaves. She wore a brown sweater, the color of dead oak leaves, a yellow-and-brown plaid skirt, and her head was bare. Hair every shade of brightness from red to the finest gold. You could not tell it from the sunshine, except that it curled. She was having the time of her life wading in those leaves.”

“Did you recognize her?” from Katherine again.

“I did not. I simply fell back.”

“Fell back!” Whitsett exclaimed in disgust.

“Didn’t want to intrude; saw she thought she was alone; wanted to see what she would do next. You rarely ever have an opportunity to observe another person when they think they are free from the restraint of every eye.”

“Don’t moralize, go on!” Lock grunted.

“She came presently to a heavy drift of leaves in a low place beside the road. She stepped into it, prettily, you understand, holding her arms out, balancing herself, evidently making sure of the ground beneath, as one might sound the depths of a pool.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

She stood for a moment not knowing, I believe, what she would do next, as kin to those leaves as a fish is to the sea. Probably she caught the idea from the wind blowing them about her. Anyway she began to dance. Never have I seen such grace. First in a circle, slowly as if she chanted with her feet; then faster, until she was spinning like a golden-headed top. And as she danced the leaves rose and whirled about her. They flew higher and higher. Sometimes I could barely see the girl, then again she showed forth as if she also might be sailing off in the wind with them. Finally she caught sight of me. That ended the performance. She literally took to her heels."

"What did you do?"

"Nothing! What could I do? I was abashed. I felt that I had witnessed a sacred, innocent orgy of the feminine soul."

"Are you sure she was a native?" Mrs. Walton wanted to know, using this term "native" as so many people do when they refer to country folk.

"Oh, yes, she lives there."

"Where did she learn to dance like that?"

"From the inside, I imagine; unstudied, perfect grace; no fashionable rag or pattern dance."

"It sounds very interesting. She might make a fortune if she could do it on the stage. Anything new; call it the Dance of the Girl and the Leaves.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Why don't you promote her, Black," Katherine suggested. "With your influence in New York—"

"Call it his past," Lock interjected.

"You might easily get an engagement for her to do that dance," Katherine finished.

"Such a blasphemy never entered my thoughts," Manson answered with a burr in his voice as if he got it out of his vocal arsenal.

Lock laid down his fork, leaned back and stared solemnly at Manson.

"He's stricken! He's in love with her! Lord, how are the mighty fallen!"

I was the one person at the table who had not by word or glance taken part in this scene. I dared not look at Manson. I wished never to see him again. In the midst of a flaming self-consciousness that he had not defended himself against Lock's accusations I caught Katherine's eye fixed in a sort of compassionate irritation on my face and knew that I had lost my color. Then the baiting of Manson went on.

"Don't tell me that you didn't set out to overtake that girl. I won't believe it," Whitsett cut in.

"Oh, I did of course," Manson admitted; and I felt suddenly that he was closing in on me—that he had been waiting for this cue.

"I thought so," Lock sneered. "And how did you manage that part of it?"

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"I didn't manage it. I simply passed her."

"In high gear or low?"

"High—making, I should say, about ten miles an hour."

"Was that all that happened?" Katherine wanted to know in a voice denoting disappointment.

For the first time during this ordeal I caught Black Manson's eye. It was provocative, triumphant. He held me in this suspense, implying that it depended entirely upon me whether he would omit the diverting climax of how this girl had in turn chased him and overtaken him. I understood that if I should show some sign of entreaty he would spare me. This was the smiling threat in his eye, beneath which I flamed scarlet. All of this in the briefest moment, and in the same moment the orchestra started up with a whirl of dancers.

"May I have this dance?" he whispered under cover of the momentary distraction the music had made.

I had been determined not to dance with him, but now this seemed the easiest way to escape.



## CHAPTER XIX

The remainder of that evening is like the confusion of a dream. What happened I attribute to the intoxication of the rhythm. I have always loved to dance above every other carnal pleasure. It is like singing with one's feet. And Black Manson danced with that strong, easy, compelling grace which held me entranced. At times I was ineffably happy; at other moments, when we were at the end of the long hall, I experienced the full measure of my antagonism and would be on the point of whirling from his arms and disappearing through a French window there which opened on a gallery. Then I was conscious that he knew what thought was in my mind by a certain closer strength with which he swung me in the midstream of the dancers, only to drift to the edge again when we were past the window.

Now and then other members of our party passed us. But when I wished to join this group between the numbers Manson said it was stuffy there and found another place on a seat beside the wall, where we were conspicuous enough, but alone.

My feeling was that it was a sort of perjury to dance with this man. I was on the point of excus-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

ing myself when the music began and I saw Hammie Lock making his way toward us.

“Nancy, spare me this one before the rush begins. Half a dozen fellows begging to be presented now! Got my hands full choosing partners for you,” he said.

But even as I stood up Black Manson took me with a gentle but firm swing into the waltz, saying over his shoulder to Hammie as we passed, “She has just given me this one.”

I had only time to see the look of cool, speculative amusement on Lock’s face before we were lost in the moving rainbow of the dance.

When a woman has always exercised romantic authority to the point of tyranny over men it is a new and not wholly unpleasant sensation to have her will snatched away from her. I could have been happy but for my deeper resentment against this man. But in spite of that my heart beat with a sort of angry exultation. We scarcely exchanged a word. It was as if some life of us apart from our real lives was united, calm and joyful beyond any mind we had to disturb it.

As near as I can tell this was the process, not mental but emotional, by which I finally permitted myself to become the sensation of the evening—a stranger, a pretty woman, growing pinker, prettier, dancing with only one man when other men would

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

gladly have made her less conspicuous with more diversified attention. I knew all that, felt it in the glance of a hundred eyes. I had the will to break away, but I was distinctly conscious of choosing this madness with the mind of a man who takes a header with the firm intention of being sober the next day and of pursuing his virtues and purposes accordingly. I became at last mischievously animated with this idea. I had been tricked into this situation. I would play the game with every art and charm I had and leave Manson to draw his own conclusions afterwards, when this truce ended, as it would at midnight of this night. Having settled this matter I became a song against this man's breast. I danced as I had never danced before, conscious always of his studious, smiling eyes bent upon me from above.

It was past eleven o'clock when finally as we came in a whirling, swifter dance close to the window which opened on the gallery I felt that we were not going to pass it. In spite of my effort now to remain in the midstream of the dancers he drew away beyond the edge and with a swing that lifted me for an instant off my feet I found myself outside on the gallery, alone with Manson and the moon. This place was glassed in and warm, with palms and ferns banked behind the benches.

I sat on one of these benches much as one carries

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

out one of the rules of polite society, which insists that one must always escape from a scene without making one if possible. In another moment I would excuse myself and go upstairs, where I was to meet Katherine at twelve o'clock.

Manson came and sat down beside me with his face turned and his eyes searching the moonlit darkness beyond. I had again the same sensation, experienced that first night at Redfields when he came across the lawn and sat on the wall of the veranda, of being dangerously near a man of ancient mould. Life and power emanated from him. His silence was the silence of a huge and overbearing nature. I stared at him and thanked heaven that I did not love him, that an implacable antagonism saved me from falling upon his breast and crying out a dreadful surrender.

"How long does this truce last? Through tomorrow?" he asked abruptly.

"I am to meet Katherine in the dressing room at twelve o'clock. What time is it now?" I asked in return.

He took out his watch. "Twenty minutes to twelve," he said, thrusting it back into his pocket.

"Do you remember that night last summer at Redfields when I found you sitting out there in the bright darkness?" he began.



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"I have not forgotten, but you did not tell me who you were," I reminded him.

"Still we knew each other," he returned.

"I did not know that you were Black Manson."

"I am not Black Manson. My name is Enoch. Black is a sort of title I got in my college days. It is descriptive, an adjective defining my coloring—and probably my disposition in those days."

"Enoch!" I exclaimed in amazed recollection of having thought of this name as descriptive of him.

"Yes, thank you," he answered.

"I was merely repeating the name," I retorted primly.

"That night I did not behave very well," he went on.

"No," I agreed.

"I was too much astonished to find you there—a white-and-gold lily wrapped in a green sheath with the moonlight on your face. If I had said anything it would have been worse than a breach of manners; you understand?" regarding me with his dark, trumpeting eyes.

"No, I do not," I answered.

"You will not. Men find salvation in love, as women find sacrifice. There is no other salvation for us. Do you think I will live now without mine?"

"For all of me you will."

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“Not if I die for it, I will not. You love me. We know love together since that night.”

“Never have I felt such antagonism to any living man. Never before has any man made hatred a pleasure to me,” I answered.

I saw his eyes drop to my hands, which were trembling as if this was really my answer.

“You are wrong about the land. I saved it—for you, not knowing. But for me, nothing would have remained of Redfields plantation when you came home.”

“I will have it all again,” I retorted.

“Willingly.”

“No. Not until I have paid for what you have taken,” I exclaimed angrily, coming to my feet.

“But it is not for sale,” he insisted smiling.

“I will wait. I can at least outlive you,” I cried.

“A futile threat, Nancy McPherson. In that event you would naturally be my heir,” he laughed.

I moved past him through the open window down into the ballroom.

“Then it is war?” he asked, joining me.

“And no quarter asked nor given,” I returned, my eyes smarting with tears. If eyes could only swallow tears, I reflected helplessly.

Then I saw Katherine on the stairs. The sight of her, poised there scanning the room for me, eased

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

the strain. Presently I would escape from the grasping will of this man. I should be myself again, sane and able. I do not know if it was this thought or some feminine trickery but—I flashed a smile at Manson through these tears that ended in a laugh. He received it with soberness, as if he were concerned for me as for one determined upon a hopeless adventure from which he would save me.

A woman may be chaste, but I doubt if the best one of us is moral in matters of love. That night I could not sleep for prideful happiness. Once more love had endowed me. I felt invincible. I had my own valor now for the struggle against Black Manson. He had himself given me the mischievous, vindictive strength for it. I could think of a hundred ways, all madly improbable, for paying that mortgage. I must have a talk with Hammie Lock and find out if there was anything in this financial flare of the sweet potato. My last thoughts were creative, having all the glamour of a romance. Manson should love me, yes, I would see to that! In the meantime I would, I must, acquire wealth—more than enough to pay father's debts, enough to make Manson humble. The thing I hated most in him was his assurance at my expense. I had no doubt he would tire of his farming project and be ready enough to sell when I should be able to buy.

## CHAPTER XX

The next morning when I came down to breakfast plans had been already made for the day. Katherine must meet Mrs. Walton's committee at ten o'clock. She could not refuse, but it was tiresome.

"So Hammie wants to take you out to the plant. And I will meet you at the club for lunch. Then we shall have the afternoon to talk it over," she said, with an enigmatic twinkle in her eye.

"She refers to your conquest of Manson, Nancy," Lock explained.

"Oh, my dear, you are a lucky girl. They have been trailing him for a year in this town. Mothers and daughters. And you just come and walk off with him in one evening!" she giggled.

"Nerve, I call it. You have not a friend in this city, Nancy. Not after that performance last night. You rubbed it in. You dragged him. It was shocking, if you want to know what I think," Lock added, wagging his head.

"Well, it does not matter what either one of you think because you do not know anything about it," I laughed.

"Only what we saw."



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"I am not interested in Mr. Manson. I have something much more important to discuss with you, Hammie. I want you to tell me about the sweet potato!"

"Oh, heavens, don't start him!" Katherine cried.

But he was already off. We would drive out to the government plant at once. They had made an experiment out there this year on a small scale—only a hundred acres—but enough to prove the enormous profit. He particularly wanted me to meet Philrod.

"Who is Philrod?"

"The man that put it over. Ready now to ship potatoes to the uttermost parts of the earth. Cured. Warranted to keep. I'd take him with me, but he will not go to Arkansas. Won't leave this state. Genius, but an old fool."

So the talk went back and forth until at last we were in the car and off to the great powder plant, which cost the Government ninety million dollars, and which had been purchased by a corporation for nine million.

It is no part of this narrative to discuss the waste of war. I merely say in passing that this plant is a stupendous illustration of it. It is now an empty city capable of housing fifty thousand people, with splendid modern school buildings, churches, gymnasiums and swimming pools. It is set in the midst

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

of five thousand acres of fertile land. A river flows through it, spanned by magnificent bridges. Paved streets and macadamized highways web every part of it. There are enough buildings in it fully equipped to accommodate a hundred big industries; enough engines to furnish three of the largest cities in this country with water; enough electric power to light every town and city in the state; enough dry goods to furnish the largest department store in New York from basement to the top floors. For example, there was more than a hundred thousand dollars' worth of household furniture and as much more of office furniture. There was sufficient clothing to clothe every man, woman and child in a big city for a year. Nothing had been omitted that could be needed or even desired by the freakish fancy, from spangled girdles for women to celluloid mustard spoons. There was a dozen huge boxes of spoons; between a hundred and two hundred thousand of them, Hammie told me. I shall always believe that this must have been the most remarkable example of foresight on the part of our Government in its stupendous preparations for war. To my mind these little white spoons indicate the very grace notes of a free and untrammelled imagination in the spending of money raised by war bonds. But there were other instances more pretentious. Three hundred valves of a rare and expensive pattern were

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

needed. The experienced stenographer to whom this order was dictated added one cipher. The government agent merely signed his name without reading the order. As it happened the entire output of these valves in this country is three thousand a year. But with the progressive energy of a vast cupidity the firm that received the order filled it. The Government paid ten thousand dollars for them. Later the same firm repurchased them for ten cents each.

Machinery worth millions of dollars lay rusting among the acres of weeds high as a man's head.

This is a partial sketch of this great plant in October of 1920 which had been assembled and built in ninety days. The people of this country will be taxed to pay for it for two hundred years to come. Poverty resulting from the insane flurry of such extravagance will send more men, women and children to their graves than all the actual casualties of our armies amounted to during the great war. But in spite of all the leagues to promote peace, no doubt the inevitable next war will find us without laws on our statute books regulating expenditures for war according to correct business methods.

I was thinking something like this in a confused way when Lock halted his car before a long, low mountain range of tiles, pipes and building material which lay beside the railroad tracks.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"We are selling this stuff for what we can get, say from ten to twenty per cent of the original cost," he said.

I had reason to remember this afterwards. In that rotting dust pile of iron, fluted hollow tiles and huge wooden beams lay the prospects of my fortune.

We came out of the terrible empty city across the river bridge into the open fertile land.

It was here on a plot of one hundred acres that he had made his experiment with sweet potatoes.

"We salvaged the machinery and material for the curing house. Cost practically nothing, except what we paid for labor. Philrod managed the whole thing," he explained.

We found Philrod out there on the edge of the field, moving like an old dusty spider among the junk heaps of a thousand pieces of machinery.

"He is converting some old tobacco planters into tractor machines for planting sweet potato slips. And he will do it!" Lock laughed as we descended from the car.

Philrod acknowledged our presence. He was too busy, too absorbed, to practice cordiality. In the brief interview which followed, his manner could not have been more authoritative if he had been Moses leading a benighted nation through the wilderness to a Canaan where the sweet potato was to prove a more substantial diet than milk and



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

honey. Also vastly more profitable. He lacked only the hypothecated beard of Moses. He was an old man, clean shaven, snappish, with sun-wrinkled eyelids that gave him a fierce blue squint.

I forbear to set down the family name of the particular potato for which Philrod had this passion, lest I should be censored on the charge of putting in a "snake" advertisement, but by the Christian name it bore of "Nancy" I infer that this potato is of the feminine gender. Philrod constantly referred to her as "she." And he endowed her with all the attributes claimed by Solomon for the virtuous woman in the last chapter of Proverbs.

"She's industrious, I tell you! And thrifty, my Lord! And modest; keeps her shape like a lady. If there is a drought, does she sit there on the ground withering? No, sir! She goes on with her duty, producing and sweetening her young yams. All you have to do is to give her a deep, soft bed for 'em to live in. She'll raise 'em every time, seasons or no seasons!"

He was still praising "her" when we started for the curing plant.

I saw forty thousand bushels of these Nancies in the bins of this low red cocoon of a house with pipes running from it in every direction like small, black beetle eyes. Every one of these potatoes was incrustated with a coat of crystallized sugar beneath

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

the toughened skin, and they were still heavy and firm, not dried.

“How on earth did you do it?” I cried, tasting the sweet yellow meat.

“That’s the secret,” Lock laughed.

“They can be shipped to the coldest parts of this country, any country, in the holds of ships across seas, without the slightest danger from frost or moisture. We make sirup and starch from the culls—those cut in harvesting, I mean, and the defective ones. That is about six per cent of the crop. We make it the most profitable six per cent.

“Come in here and I’ll show you the financial proofs of our success,” he said, holding the door of his snug little office open for me to enter.

I sat waiting while he looked through a stack of papers on his desk. My heart was beating with what must be the same sort of excitement a man experiences when quite by accident he discovers a profitable ore mine on his farm. My thoughts spun a web of gold above the old cottonfield behind the Redfields station. What was to prevent me from engaging in this potato business? Surely Hammie Lock would not begrudge me such a chance to recoup my fortune if he knew the situation.

He thrust some pages of typewritten stuff across the desk.

“The names of three hundred brokers from all

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

parts of this country who are now bidding for our potatoes," he informed me with a grin.

It was at this point, with my hand trembling above these pages on his desk, that I presented my own case: the necessity I was under to raise money, to make money and to get a great deal of it quickly. I did not omit the story of how father had been obliged to sacrifice nearly half of Redfields plantation.

He had listened at first in amazement, then with the quiet, averted eyes of a man at a funeral. But when I mentioned the sum paid for this timberland, including the two hundred acres cleared, he glanced back at me.

"Who bought it at that price?" he growled.

I hesitated, flushing with the consciousness that it was to protect Black Manson when I answered:

"Oh, it doesn't matter now. He paid for it. And the worst is that he holds a mortgage for twenty thousand on the remainder of Redfields!"

"He must be some rascal!"

"For him it was simply a good stroke of business," I was astonished to hear myself reply.

I wondered what his comment would be if I should suddenly reveal the name of this rascal. Then I wondered why I did not reveal it. Instead I went on after a pause:

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"The mortgage falls due in another year and the interest has not been paid in two years."

"He could afford to wait with such security," he grumbled.

"But there are the best of reasons why I could not bear to ask for time—not from him," I explained.

"Oh, I see," he said, looking away again as if he desired to remove what he saw from my sight.

"Hammie," I began, "there is a hundred acres of better land than you have here at Redfields for raising potatoes."

He flitted round in his chair and regarded me with startled interest; not, I felt, altogether favorable interest, but as a man listens to the impractical plans of a woman. But I was not to be discouraged. Too much depended upon his approval. Presently I felt that he was really taking hold. He began to ask questions. Yes, the location was right, he admitted. My description of the soil was favorable. And the fact that there was a railroad station on this land was nothing short of providential.

"Reduces the cost by half," he exclaimed. "And the material you need for the curing plant is right here, to be had for a song. If you had five hundred acres I'd take it over myself, Nancy!"

"But I want to do it, the whole thing, myself.



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

You wouldn't understand, but it is not merely the money I need—it is the reason I have for putting something over, a big thing, the kind of thing a man does," I went on breathlessly.

"But you are a woman. You can't. Very few women found big businesses, though they manage one after it is going in rare instances.

"And there is another trouble. This is a secret process we have. It is not the drying method already in use. And we figure that at least five years must elapse before the producers at large discover our secret. Before that time our fortunes will be made and we can afford to be philanthropic, but not yet!" smiling grimly.

"You mean that you cannot tell me how it is done?"

"We are bound not to do so."

"Doesn't Philrod know?"

"Oh, yes. But he is safe. He has invested all his capital in it. Stock company, you know."

"But you told me a while ago that he will not go with you to Arkansas. He might be willing to come to Redfields," I suggested.

Lock whistled. He whistled three bars of a silly tune and then went over it again and again until my nerves were on edge.

"He might do it. No telling what Philrod will or will not do," he admitted finally.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"If I might see him!" I began.

He laughed.

"I shouldn't wonder if he didn't fall for anything you wanted, Nancy; most men would. But what about Manson?" regarding me with a shrewd twinkle.

My heart fell. My color rose. Did this mean that he knew of Manson's relation to this situation? Had he and Katherine only pretended ignorance?

"It is just as well to be frank in matters of business. Not that I would otherwise invite your confidence," he explained, smiling more broadly.

"I really cannot see what Mr. Manson has to do with this," I returned with frigid dignity.

"Nothing, of course, but it appears to all of us that he—well, you know it was pretty plain last night that he is tremendously interested in you."

"I do not admit that, but what if he is?"

"Well, it ought to settle everything for you in the happiest possible way—that is—" regarding me with a genially interrogative stare.

"Hammie, don't mention that man to me. I—I dislike him intensely," I almost sobbed.

"You have a strange way of showing it. My impression is that you encouraged him last night. Katherine insists that it is a case of love at first sight," he laughed.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"I cannot explain, but you are mistaken. I shall not marry any one, least of all Mr. Manson. I have made my vows to the land. I am determined to keep Redfields. Now if you could only help me, I know this would be my chance to do something really worth while," I said, and led him on to discuss what the costs would be.

He figured briefly, as a man does who has all the calculations by memory.

"Fifteen thousand ought to see you through," he said, regarding me thoughtfully.

"Then I shall need twenty thousand, and I have not one," I sighed.

He looked at his watch. "Just time enough to meet Katherine for lunch," rising.

I had the depressed feeling that the need of twenty thousand dollars had closed this discussion. But when we were spinning along the road back to town Lock surprised me with this:

"I am taking your word for it, Nancy, that you are not, cannot be interested in Manson. Am I right?"

"Please, Hammie! I cannot even bear to think of him!"

"Well, you might later, you know."

"I won't!"

"He is all to the good. I can tell you that. Made a mint of money in New York. Got a farm down

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

here somewhere. Nobody knows where. Gets his mail through his bank in New York. But this farming project is only a whim. He will go back to his business when conditions are more favorable. I think I ought to tell you he is all right. You could depend upon him. He is straight."

"But I don't want to depend on him—I—do you know how it sounds for you to be recommending him—like this—when you only introduced him to me last night?" I exclaimed, choosing my words awkwardly, in order to tell the truth about this meeting without betraying the real truth.

"No offense meant, Nancy. I only wanted to make sure before we went further into this potato business. There may be something in it for you," he answered soothingly.

His mind was still on that then! I was encouraged and appeased. I said something polite about Manson, implying that he was no doubt a very personable person, but potatoes were far more attractive to me now. At which he laughed and said girls were funny things—"the most careless gamblers on earth with their own destinies!"

We were crawling at a snail's pace through the traffic of the downtown streets before he began abruptly:

"I'll tell you what we will do. After lunch I will drop you and Katherine somewhere. Then I



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

will go into this thing thoroughly for you. Philrod is the main difficulty."

"I should think getting the loan would be the hardest thing. I could only give a second mortgage on Redfields. And people don't seem to care for second mortgages."

He let out a snort of laughter. "As a rule, no, but I have a man in mind who might risk it. I am pretty sure he will. The whole thing depends on Philrod. That is as the wind takes him."

I spent a fierce afternoon with Katherine, shopping. When you have no money with which to buy, the frivolity and extravagance of a woman who has is irritating. Besides, she must hurry home because she was sure Black would call before he left the city.

But when we came in no one had called.

"That means that he is coming with Hammie for dinner!" she decided.

"Run up and dress, Nancy. And do use a little rouge, dear. You look a bit fagged," she entreated.

It was past seven o'clock when Lock finally came in, and alone.

"Where is Black?" Katherine demanded.

"Haven't an idea," Lock answered cheerfully.

"But he has not called nor sent flowers—nor anything! Have you seen him?"

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Yes, I did," his manner implied that this was only a casual, passing glimpse.

"I have been at the plant all afternoon. Had it out with Philrod, Nancy," turning to me with a fine sparkle. "Looks like a sure thing. I think he will take you up."

"Take Nancy up. What do you mean?" Katherine demanded, puzzled.

"Another speculation in sweet potatoes, kitten. McPherson and Philrod, this time. Tell you all about everything after dinner, Nancy!" he called from the stairs.

"But what has become of Black?" Katherine squealed after him.

"Oh, he left on the afternoon train. I don't know what becomes of him when he goes," he yelled back, as if Manson was the least of his thoughts.

"Men are so stupid!"

"You mean Hammie?" I asked, seeing her disconsolate face.

"Yes, he is a good husband but a perfect dolt about some things. Any woman would have known what to do, but Hammie doesn't seem to have thought of bringing Black Manson out here to see you," she fussed.

"I don't want to see him."

"That's your cue, of course, Nancy. But you know he is crazy about you, and I know you are in

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

love with him. Why, you have not mentioned him once to-day. That is a sure sign. You need not blush!"

"I blush to think how little you know about it," I retorted.

"And lovers are so helpless in this first stage! I am simply out of patience with Hammie," unmoved in her convictions by what I had just said.

Before the end of the evening I was committed to the plan of building a curing plant at Redfields station and of trying my fortune with nothing between me and misfortune but Philrod's experience and a loan of twenty thousand dollars which Lock had secured with a second mortgage on Redfields plantation.

"I have had the papers made out. All you have to do is to sign your name here on this line," he said, unfolding the paper.

"But from whom am I borrowing this money?" I wanted to know.

"From the Trust and Savings Bank of New York. They have an agency here. Better read it," he suggested.

Nothing, I believe, is more binding on the carnal rights and liberties of men than a mortgage, unless it is the vows they take when they join the church, which is indeed a mortgage nobody ever pays off.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

This one was of that sternly grasping nature. But I made haste to sign it.

“Now present this check at your bank and you are financed for better or for worse!” he said, offering me a cashier’s certified check for twenty thousand dollars.

“Philrod is coming down to you one day next week. After that it is sink or swim for you, Nancy!” he laughed.

The next afternoon I took the train for Redfields, twice my original depth in debts and mortgages, committed to a new and untried speculation, but feeling immeasurably financed with every kind of hope that makes a woman more wilfully and proudly a woman.

The day was raw and drizzling rain. When we were within a few miles of Redfields station this rain changed to sleet, which stuck to the windows of the coach, making them like ground glass. I rubbed the inside fog off and tried to see through. The only object I made out was the blurred shape of a long-bodied automobile on the road below the railroad. The driver was evidently racing with the train, a perilous thing to do considering the condition of the road. I put on my raincoat, buttoned it snugly to my chin just as the whistle blew for Redfields.

It was Sunday afternoon. The station would be



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

deserted. Even Tinkham's store would be closed. I was dreading the walk home in this weather as I followed the porter with my bag to the platform of the car.

The wind caught me in a blinding whirl of sleet as I descended from the coach. For the briefest instant I thought this was the conductor handing me down. Then the feel of his warm, enormous hand passed through me like a shock, and I was standing on the ground staring into the smiling eyes of Black Manson. Behind him in the road stood the long racing car with the steam hissing from the top of the radiator.

"I have been racing with you for the last four miles," he laughed, hurrying me to this car, in which the porter had already flung my bag.

"This thing is wide open," he said springing in beside me, and folding his tall knees under the wheel, "but I had an idea you might like a good stiff whiff of this weather," slipping noiselessly into high gear.

"Yes," I gasped, when the wind blew my breath away.

"It is what I call a fine farming day," he said.

"I love it!" I answered.

"You would! You believe in inclement weather. But you can afford to," taking a bolder look at me.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

My face was wet, my hair crinkled and blown across my eyes.

This was the end of speech between us. The distance was so short. I was sure he was conscious of having won another stroke. I was recklessly happy, giving him one careening wind-whipped smile after another. But I was supremely conscious of that animosity which is the very claws of love. I could have shouted, swinging close to him over this perilous road, knowing at last that I had the means to defeat him.

Once more at the door of Redfields house he caught me beneath his trumpeting black eyes, as if he read my mind and thought lightly of my treachery.

“Good-by and good luck!” he said, with the same amused twinkle.



## PART SEVEN

### CHAPTER XXI

It is a good thing to change your mind, your convictions, even your prejudices, occasionally. For by this simple process you change your scenes, that inward topography of life which is so much more diversified than the East or the West of the mere earth. The fact that so many people fail to do this accounts for the listless submission of the poor, who move from time to time, like leaves blown in the wind by no hope or volition of their own. And it also explains the nomadic existence of the rich, who travel for change and diversion. Their restlessness is the result of mental cowardice and moral laziness. They go to Florida because the scenes are laid there by Nature and capital for their indulgence and amusement. They go abroad for the same reason, because it is easier to suck culture, ready-made, from museums than to be really well-bred, easier to visit the tombs of history than to produce history. They ride hobbies because they lack the energy and perseverance for any honorable



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

achievement. They attend operas and theaters to be spoon-fed emotionally because they have no powers within themselves to feel without artificial stimulation. They become involved in dangerous and decadent activities against society, not because they are honestly deluded radicals: it is their way of furnishing the funds to stage the ghastly drama of which horror is the motif. They want to see Rome burn because destruction is their instinct. Nero was a neurasthenic. They have been emasculated morally and spiritually by money. And for lack of honest idealism they inspire the mischief for which their victims pay with their lives and their liberties.

The queer thing is that they do not succeed. It is because they have a sort of vermin imagination which destroys but never produces a creed or any culture nor a system of government which does not prove to be abhorrent to the very nature of men. Meanwhile some far off Energy is always at work on the next "act" for all of us. The Greeks called it Fate and read their oracles according to the wings and tail feathers of flying birds. The Jews called it Jehovah and had prophets to prove it. In every age, in every race from the lowest to the highest those men with the instinct to roost high believe somehow in the Almighty.

What is true by the large is also true of us individually. Once in so often we get a new part to

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

play. And we do not realize that for a long time we have been coached for this rôle. Your anæmic rich fellow rejects it and buys a new sensation. Your poor man flunks it. But by the hardest we who are neither very rich nor very poor get together a stock company to play the thing and change the spotlight of civilization.

When I returned to Redfields in June of this year 1920, I had been depleted by ten years of silly worldly success—a sort of intellectual trick performance with my imagination. I had only a choir sense of religion, which is no sense at all of God. The life of all cities tends toward atheism and materialism, financed by the astounding enterprise of eloquent, elegant, highly paid preachers in disgracefully expensive churches. But drop the bravest unbeliever into a wilderness, leave him exposed to the harsh ministry of the elements, and before December of the following year you will find him on his knees somewhere praying for the primitive comforts of warmth and food, which cannot be bought of God but are to be had only by the favor of His weather and seasons if you work for them.

I had some severe lessons in Providence during the drought. For a time I had been cowed by the hopeless monotony and poverty about me. I was terrified by debts. I was a woman who had been financed splendidly in matters of love. And I was

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

now living in a place where I was under the decent necessity of hating the only available lover within a thousand miles. I was in a deplorable situation, you understand.

It was, I shall always believe, the sense of the Land which restored me, lifted me and changed my scenes. The first impractical spiritual exaltation at recovering this feeling of kinship with the eldest ancestor of us all had stiffened into a working formula of material salvation. And I set it down here with apologies to all those crueller, more exacting saints who live and think by rote of their Lord, and who censor the rest of us so impiously. I had by this time a very strong gambling sense of Providence based on the weather. One must have if his fortunes rest upon the yield of harvests from the land. Whatever may be said of election or predestination so far as the salvation of men is concerned there is no doubt in my mind that the weather was foreordained from the beginning, and it blows that way, and rains or does not rain regardless of what you plant in your bottoms or on your uplands.

Father had become the pale, gentle phantom of a former man, always patiently waiting to be noticed. He was soon to be the one tenderness in my harsh days. I had now the money to meet obligations and to finance the immediate future. Black Manson

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

was bound to lose his creditor's hold on Redfields plantation. If he lost his heart as well that also would be a legitimate profit for me in this transaction. His conduct had relieved me of any scruples, if indeed I was capable of entertaining scruples of this kind. The truth is, I had never been in love with any man. I had simply been loved, a satisfying but not expensive experience for an attractive woman. What I mean is that I had never suffered that curious and anguishing defeat a woman knows in love, however secretly she knows it.

There existed in me now the confusion of two great emotions: a new and consuming passion for this land which was my birthright, and shrewd cat-spitting antagonism toward Black Manson, who was still bent upon getting possession of it. It meant a complete change of scenes in my life. I had made this change. It was an act of courage. I felt brave but not fearless. But not to fear is to be a fool, to miss the sting of the spur that forces you to take the top rail in good form.

Philrod came down the week after my visit to the Locks. We went over the ground. He was more than satisfied with the location of the land and the quality of the soil.

"Six hundred bushels of potatoes may be the yield from an acre," he told me. "I do not say we can hope for so much the first year, but we must at least



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

try to split the difference between that and the ordinary yield of four hundred under the best methods of cultivation.”

We spent the afternoon going over the plans. There must be a curing plant built of hollow tiles, ninety by ninety feet. It must be divided into bins, six by six by nine feet, each bin to contain two hundred and fifty bushels of potatoes. There would be one hundred and sixty bins in this house. The cost, including tiles, drying pipes and other materials, freight and labor would be not more than twelve hundred dollars, Philrod assured me. One carload of selected seed potatoes he could furnish himself for two hundred and fifty dollars, which was twenty dollars less than the market price. He would rent six tobacco planters for the season. They could be made to do until he invented a machine. These would cost sixty dollars.

Fertilizer, including several hundred pounds of potash extra, would come to one hundred dollars. We must have potash to raise potatoes. Fortunately there was a surplus stock of it at Savannah, which we later obtained at a very low price.

I had my own tractor for turning and harrowing the land, and enough teams to draw the planters.

The original investment then covered the following items, which I copy from Philrod's estimates. And we did not exceed them.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Curing plant . . . . .	\$1,200
Planters rented . . . . .	60
Potash and fertilizer . . . . .	100
Seed potatoes . . . . .	250
<hr/>	
Total . . . . .	\$1,610

“If I don’t miss my guess our gross income from this first crop will be something like forty thousand dollars,” he said.

“The success of the whole thing really depends upon you,” he warned me when he was about to take his departure.

“Upon me?” thankful that this could be so.

“Yes, upon how well and how deep you turn the land this winter. It must be turned not less than fourteen inches. The January freezes will sponge it. If you get this done, neither flood nor drought will affect the yield of potatoes to any appreciable extent.”

“If I ride the tractor myself it shall be done,” I assured him.

This was the first intimation I had that human forethought may circumvent the weather work of Providence.

Still if the weather had not cleared with a high wind blowing for days during the early part of

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

November, I cannot say how this story might have ended, for if the rains had continued the land could not have been turned.

I employed old Archie Winch to do this work. For ten days he sat upon that little squalling tractor, dragging two disks, a crazy-looking little wheelbarrow wheel and two subsoilers behind him through the field. The tractor was tanked up. So was Archie. But this was no time to concentrate on the morals of prohibition or on economy in gasoline. Winch told his cronies around Redfields station that no man in his sober senses would ruin a hundred acres of land by turning up the hard-pan. He said he was obliged to keep "lit" in order to silence his conscience.

This was the general opinion—that I was going to unnecessary expense to make this land unproductive. Crowds of men gathered in the windy November sunshine to watch the plowing. It was reasonable and right to turn land in the fall, but it was madness to rip the very gizzard out of it! Six inches was as deep as a plow should go! They spat tobacco juice and rumbled among themselves in the masculine undertones of disaster. Now and then some bolder or kinder one of them approached me, standing on the edge of the field like a small pillow of blowzy wind-blown cloud, urging Winch not to falter or lift his plow. What was the idea, this

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

man wanted to know, of breaking the very bottom out of this land. I explained briefly, having very little knowledge at the time with which to defend my methods of agriculture. It was to let moisture up in case of drought and the water down in case of a wet season. Cotton, I was informed, did better in dry weather, and if it was a wet year nothing would save it. I had not confided to any one, not even to Winch, that the field would be planted in sweet potatoes. With everything else on my hands I did not feel equal to defending this adventure. I would leave them to discover the length and breadth of my madness as it developed.

My nerve broke at last, however, when day after day I saw the sickly, sticky, hard soil turned up and the rich sandy loam turned under. One day I hurried frantically to the 'phone and called Philrod. I asked him if there was any danger in hard-pan. He answered sharply that it was the worst thing possible.

"Well," I informed him tearfully, "we have turned up nearly fifty acres of it."

"Go ahead, turn it all up! Then we won't have any. Leave it to freeze a couple of times, then take your chances for harrowing it back in. That's original soil, good stuff. We need it."

"Oh, I am so thankful, Mr. Philrod," I quavered.

"Why?"



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Well, they are saying out here that I am ruining this land plowing it so deep."

"Let them do the talking, you do the plowing. We'll have the last word next October," he cackled.

So the hundred acres were turned. Then there came a hard freeze followed by an east wind and three inches of snow, which lay upon the ground for nearly a week. Followed another ten days of bitter cold. And I was anxious lest we should not get the land harrowed. But late in December Winch was in again with a spangle of disks behind his tractor. We were now so near the holiday season, always one of total inebriation for Winch, that I dared not remain for one day at Redfields house. My presence kept him on the tractor and reasonably sober.

I have known in a mild way what it is to be a lightly distinguished person, to have my picture in the section of a magazine devoted to book reviews. And I have seen these books piled in shop windows for sale. There is a satisfaction in such experiences. But if you are honest you know that there are ten thousand better books out, a score of authors who surpass you so far that you can never be thought of in the same day with them. Now, however, for the first time in my life I tasted the joys of a superlative egotism. I was doing something real that counted. I had become a producer. Who was Belasco com-

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

pared with me? Belasco was a magician with artificial lights and stage scenery who produced an amusement by portraying a folly or a tragedy which was no more than the mimicry of the humor and tragedy of life. Who was H. G. Wells anyhow? Another magician who wrote what might be true or what might be false with an equal facility of conviction. A doughty little English cockney whose brain bloomed or stank according to the mood he was in. I was now great in my own right, with no need of a press agent or even a publisher. I was dealing with the great order of things. This was no little typewritten page of fanciful lies. This was the wide mellow breast of the earth out of which should come real substance in return for labor; food, the thing all men must have whether they read or do not read.

No wonder the man who labors, who plows and plants and reaps, is a man of insufferable pride. He has the original Adam patent on human pride. I felt all the plus of being one of Nature's noblemen. Old Winch gave it to me. Still, I had bought the tractor and I was paying Winch. You can't do everything, especially if you are a woman. I had, however, the ambition to be as worthy as possible of my exalted pride. One afternoon I obliged Winch to descend and I mounted the tractor, shifted the gears and started round this immense field. Winch

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

followed close beside me, bellowing such instructions as these: "Keep her throttled down! Step on it! Give her gas! Land's stiff here!"

Getting yourself treated with electricity by a pale specialist is nothing to what a tractor can do for you in the way of shock. This thing jarred me until my whole body was numb. But I remained on the little swaying seat and the disks remained in the ground. The tails of my coat flew back, flapping in the wind. I felt this wind tugging at the green felt hat on my head, but I was riding an angry monster that hissed and bellowed. If I relaxed my frantic grip on the steering wheel for a moment I might lose control. My face burned, my eyes were set in a wide stare ahead. I do not remember when the hat flew off, but I had a glimpse of Winch bearing it gingerly aloft as if this was my lady's falcon he carried on his wrist.

I should not have seen Black Manson if he had not appeared at the edge of the field directly in line with my vision. He was standing tilted back against the wind, his hands in his overcoat pockets, the brim of his hat blown flat against the crown. And he was laughing. I could hear the whoop of his merriment. At the same moment the engine let out a raucous grunt and ceased to be. The terrific noise and vibrations beneath me also ceased. It was a relief!

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"You chocked her, Miss Nancy, you chocked her dead!" Winch shouted, hurrying to the crank. He spun it, still clutching my hat in his other hand. But when the motor was going again I had already abdicated.

"You may go ahead, Mr. Winch. I merely wished to make sure that I could handle a tractor," I said with dignity, reaching for my hat.

"Oh, yes'm, you could handle her," he returned, eyeing me coolly as he climbed into the seat. "A lady can do anything for ten minutes, but how long could she hold out? That's what I arsk the whole of your sex, marm!"

He was not able to resist a toot of his horn as he passed on turning the clods to powder beneath the harrow.

My belief is that Winch's question is an important one. We read constantly of Eastern pussy-kitten girls who have gone West, taken up land and farmed it successfully, driving their own tractors, reapers and binders. I wonder how many of them really do, or if they have their pictures taken seated on one of these machines, as I sat for half an hour on my tractor. Of one thing I am convinced: if Southern women ever use more than their mere executive talents at this business and actually drive their own tractors they must be made with shock absorbers and silencers.



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

My limbs trembled, my very knees quavered as I started walking across this field. Manson was already coming to meet me, his merriment subsiding to a genial grin as he drew near enough to make out the fierce seriousness of my own face.

"Where did you learn to drive a tractor?" he asked, taking my arm and swinging me along lightly over the soft earth.

"I have always known how to drive a flivver," I replied primly.

"Well, you certainly were harrowing like a veteran farmer."

"I prefer the sewing machine," I admitted, relaxing beneath this flattery and beginning to laugh.

We came out into the road behind the station, where his racing car stood. Before the speculative eyes of the men in the doorway of Tinkham's store we climbed into this car and were off.

"A smooth road feels very kind after bumping over a plowed field," I said amiably.

"You are preparing a wonderful seed bed there. Turning under the boll weevil too. Ought to grow fine cotton next year."

If this was a sneaking question put in simple declarative form I was not to be led by it into a betrayal of my secret plans. So I merely answered, "Yes," and was conscious of a swift glance shot at me from the tail of his eye.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Why is it if you are tired and suddenly find yourself in the presence of a man your weariness frequently changes into animation? If you are actually ill you immediately feel remarkably well. I do not know, but it is a fact. My spirits rose now as we picked up speed. But it was not the speed; it was the man beside me that afforded this refreshment. I could have sung a song, I could have waved a salutation to every tree we passed with its boughs bending in the wind. But I remained silent. We both were. It was moved and agreed between us by an exchange of glances that speech might lead to an altercation concerning sordid business matters. I remember dismissing the appearance I made in this rough coat and rumpled hat and dusty shoes with the reflection that if he had seen me driving a tractor he had also danced with me. Women most constantly finance themselves with the counting of the beads of their charms.

“Are we going anywhere?” I asked after a while, seeing that we were by this time beyond Redfields.

“No place, merely together,” he answered, smiling ahead.

“We will run into Cameron. I am expecting a wire; was on my way to get it when I saw you on the tractor. Knew you could not hold out for a second round. Waited on the chance of picking you up,” he added after a pause.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

There is this difference between men and women: When a woman is bent on conquest she becomes animated, vivacious, she brightens and fades like a mirage. She is distant when she appears near, and suddenly very close when you thought her far removed. When you are dying of thirst in this desert she suddenly gives you her eyes as if these eyes were blue springs of living water. Or she will say some little thing that revives and nourishes you like milk and honeydew from the paradise of lovers. One thing you may depend upon: she is always revolving and evolving some new vision of herself. She is the very kaleidoscope, not merely of herself but of every charm that belongs to any of the natures of women. She can do and be a thousand forms of loveliness for no reason at all except that of making an idle conquest. But a man gifted with the corresponding powers of attraction can be mercilessly silent—and simply wait, wait for your nerve to break, for some predicted moment when you will betray yourself with a word or a gesture.

The night following this ride with Black Manson, during which the silence between us had become at last so personal and significant as to be anguishing to me, I retired early, not to sleep but to suffer. I flung myself face downward on the bed and wept tears of rage. Wrestling with a mere angel for a blessing is nothing to the struggle a woman passes

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

through wrestling with her own heart for freedom from the dominion of love.

At last I was calmer, having arrived once more at the determination never to be taken by Black Manson. I would achieve my own fate. I had the precious opportunity to prove my abilities and to keep the same for my own service. Love depleted a woman, deprived her of that inward sense of liberty so essential to her profounder self-respect. She exchanged this for tenderness, shelter and obedience when she surrendered to love.

I considered tactics in the management of this affair. The next time I met Black Manson I would talk; I would not cease to talk even if I babbled. I would never again endure the implication of the silences that had fallen between us upon these former occasions.



## CHAPTER XXII

The night before Christmas Eve a great storm of sleet and snow blew down upon us. Snow fell until noon of the next day. Then the clouds cleared, the wind passed away and the earth lay like a bride in whiteness, every shrub and tree above her sparkling like jeweled patterns in a veil of lace covering all her hills and valleys.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon. I had been seated before the old secretary in the library getting off Christmas notes and packages. Now Ike came in with an armful of holly boughs. I moved about the room, thrusting a berry-laden branch here and there above a picture or in some old bracket on the wall. Then I sat down to the making of wreaths for the doors. This was chiefly to entertain father and to revive in his mind some faint vision of other years when this house was a merry place at this season. He sat now bundled up in his warm red dressing gown on the other side of the fire, watching me and fumbling with these memories.

"Nancy, what was it we had on Christmas Day?" he wanted to know.

"Turkey."

"No, something else."

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Plum pudding."

"It was not that," he insisted irritably.

"Eggnog," I admitted.

Yes, of course, but this was something he and Angus Armstead made for themselves here in the library.

"Probably," I concluded dryly, and went on binding and bending these wreaths, knowing that if I remained silent long enough he would drift away into his innocent sleep of forgetfulness. Then it occurred to me that I might send for Angus Armstead to-morrow to keep father company on Christmas Day. I would make a celebration for these two old children slipping so dizzily down to the end of their years.

Then there was the stamping of feet on the veranda, followed by the creaking of the front door. I listened, holding some sprigs of holly in my hands and stared at the library door, which began to open slowly and secretly.

Mrs. Tinkham stuck her head in. She glanced at father, who leaned back asleep, looking like an old bearded saint. Then she put her hand in and worked her forefinger at me like a hook.

I rose and tiptoed softly into the hall.

"What is it?" I asked, knowing that something must have happened to bring her out in such weather.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

She wore a pink woolen fascinator over her blond wig; her face was scarlet from the cold and she was quite breathless.

"It's Angus Armstead. He's gone," she gasped.

"Gone?"

"Dead."

"Ah!"

"Couldn't get you word sooner. 'Phone out of order and me obliged to take care of things at the store on account of Tinkham having to be over there," incoherently.

"When did it happen?"

"Died last night. Harper passed there early this morning and he heard Bonnie squalling in the house. But he dassent go in," glancing sidewise at me. "Can't tell always why a woman like that makes a fuss. So he came on to the store and told Tinkham and they went back over there, Winch and Harper with him.

"They found Angus slumped down in his chair, gone, cold as ice, and Bonnie running round barefooted in her nightdress, screaming and tearing her hair."

"How awful!"

"Yes, it is, and Bruce away on a spree. Nobody knows where he is."

"Something must be done!"

"Oh, everything's been done that can be. The

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

men have laid Angus out. They were putting him in the coffin a while ago as I came over here. And the doctor has been there to see Bonnie. She's resting quiet now, but—" hesitating and looking at me.

"Yes?"

"There ain't been a woman in that house to-day, nor for years that I know of. I didn't go in myself. But I was thinking some of us ought to go."

"Of course," I agreed, hurrying to put on my wraps and to send Ike in to stay with father.

We were already outside on the veranda when Mrs. Tinkham remarked, "There ain't no flowers this time of the year. Seems hard to drop an old man in the grave without a bouquet or something on him."

I ran back, caught up the Christmas wreaths and came out with them.

We trudged off through the snow, Mrs. Tinkham voicing from time to time whatever reflections she had. She said Angus Armstead was a "good man in a way," which was the best she could do for him. Then she said she supposed things would break up on the Armstead place now. Bruce had run through everything and Bonnie was no good.

"They won't stay here. So long as an old tree stands the pisen vines will cling to it and live, but when it falls they are bound to go down with it," she concluded. After a pause she added, "But some-



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

thing is going to happen before Bruce leaves, or I miss my guess."

"What will happen?" I asked.

"Well, it's no use to talk," she evaded.

We found a ghastly scene in that disheveled old house. Despair had kept it and death had visited it.

Angus had already been screwed down in his coffin, which rested upon two chairs in the middle of the front room. The old armchair in which he had sat for so many years stood reared back before the cold fireplace. Mrs. Tinkham brushed up the hearth and lighted the lamp. I covered the lid of the casket with my wreaths. Half a dozen men stood out on the porch, talking in rumbling undertones.

"I reckon we ought to go in there," Mrs. Tinkham said, jerking her head toward the closed door of the next room.

We went in. The room was lighted only with the reflected pallor of the snow from the outside.

Bonnie lay straight and still on her bed, her hair spread on the pillow, her dark eyes wide open. She fixed them upon me gravely. Mrs. Tinkham went out to get a lamp. But no light could change the pallor in this room. The girl's face held it. Mrs. Tinkham went out again. I heard her moving about in the kitchen. I said something to Bonnie. She made no reply; merely covered me with that long

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

gaze. I wanted to touch her, take her hand in mine, but dared not.

Mrs. Tinkham came in with food, a steaming cup. But Bonnie turned her head away. Presently when we were again alone she said softly, still with her face to the wall.

"You can go now. You have done your duty. I want you both to go."

I went out and found Mrs. Tinkham waiting for me.

"We might as well go. We have done our Christian duty by her," she said.

"Some of her folks are coming on the evening train. And Tinkham just told me they have found Bruce in Cameron."

So we came away. I did not attend the funeral the next day. But the Tinkhams came over in the afternoon. Father recognized Mr. Tinkham. He wanted to know if he had "seen Angus lately." Mr. Tinkham said he had.

"Tell him to come over," father commanded with a touch of his old authoritative air.

Mrs. Tinkham whispered to me that Bonnie was going back with her folks to Atlanta.

"But you watch my words. Bruce will lay round here until something happens," she added.

She had so often made this dark insinuation about Bruce Armstead that I was not impressed.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

She went on with the current news. She had heard that Black Manson was away for the holidays. Did I know that? I did not know anything about Mr. Manson, I assured her. She looked at me as if she thought I did, and went on with her gossip. She had heard that Harper's wife was getting her mind back and would be home by spring. And that old Tom Carpenter was down with pneumonia, and that Mrs. Broadwick was "going to town some time in January to do her winter trading."

I wondered as I listened to this artless tattling how I was going to bear it for years and years. This was Christmas Day, and far away in the gathering gloom of the evening I could see the teeming streets of New York, sparkling in a myriad of lights. The holiday crowds on the Avenue, hurrying to their parties and rendezvous. I knew where old friends would meet to-night. I had scarcely thought of Oliver Winchell. Now I longed for him, the smoothness of his wit, the elegance of his presence. This was a cold, sad and rigid Christmas Day through which I had passed. A few gifts, a few notes, but not a word from my enemy. He might have, well, done something. After all we were neighbors. I was suddenly tempted to send Oliver a telegram. And fell back from this temptation as one avoids a blow or a responsibility. Still I wanted him. The trouble is that I knew I needed him for

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

only an hour or two; for a change, not forever. It was better, I concluded sensibly and dismally, to raise potatoes that could be sold and converted into some other value than to take a lover who could not be changed into anything but a husband, and there evolution ceased.



## CHAPTER XXIII

On the first day of January, 1921, I made a check to Black Manson for three thousand two hundred dollars and wrote at the bottom, "Payment in full of interest on Redfields mortgage to date." I mailed this thing with no additional comment. The following day I received an equally brief acknowledgment from him in the form of a receipt. The omission of polite financial language had its effects on both of us. I did not see him for two months. At first I congratulated myself upon having conveyed to him at last a correct impression of our strictly business relationship. Then I became suspicious. One of the ways men have of reducing the pride of a woman is to affect indifference. Finally I suffered the humiliation of being obliged to conclude that he really was indifferent. His attentions had been a form of masculine diablerie, an idle and mischievous effort at conquest which had failed. I was proud of having escaped any wound to my vanity, and at times wholly wretched after the manner of women, because life had become a strictly business enterprise, with no romantic glamour to relieve the harshness of it.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Early in February Philrod came on to take charge of the potato industry. Followed immediately one car after another laden with building material, which was unloaded at Redfields station. Strange-looking stuff, composed for the most part of hollow tiles, brick red and a trifle longer than the average brick. It was consigned to Philrod, and the speculations as to what he would do with it were rife. Then the box car of a work train was switched off at Redfields one day, which emitted half a score of masons, carpenters and laborers. No time was lost. Before they could sample the contents of Tinkham's store, Philrod had them across the railroad to the edge of the plowed ground and started to laying out the foundations for the curing house. The people of this community are splendidly endowed with curiosity, and they have never been satiated by the reel- ing world of affairs, nor by culture, nor any other form of mental food. Therefore they wanted to know what this building was for and why. They wanted to know all about this mysterious business. Finally I admitted to Mrs. Tinkham that it was for potatoes.

"Potatoes! What kind?"

"Sweet," I told her.

She lamented with her hands, lifting them and letting them fall like large withered leaves.

"Nancy," she exclaimed, "you are just like your

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

father. He was always spending a fortune on one adventure after another."

It occurred to me with a sort of sinking feeling that I might indeed be following in father's disastrous footsteps.

"Don't you know you can't keep a house full of sweet potatoes? And you can't sell them, only a few bushels now and then?" she moaned.

"I wish you had let some of us know what you were up to. Why didn't you advise with Mrs. Broadwick? She is sensible and experienced in farming."

"I did."

"What did she say?"

"She was against my doing anything," I laughed.

"Tinkham could have told you potatoes are a drug on the market. They are poor folks' food, so you get poor folks' prices for 'em."

"Well, there are more poor people than rich ones. I produce for the biggest market in the world," I retorted.

"Wait and see what you produce," she warned.

This was the beginning of the battle we waged the whole of that year against the prejudices of our neighbors. Farming is like religion during the early Christian centuries. It leads to persecution. If you change your crops and your methods of cultivation the ancient orthodox priests of the land take up arms

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

against you. They preach and prophesy your financial damnation. And nothing will convert them but the evidence of their own eyes as to your success. Then they become your fiercest competitors.

Philrod became waspish, very unpopular. I was frequently reduced to tears by my secret fears that these people, who ought to know the land, were right and that now nothing could save Redfields plantation from sinking beneath the weight of two mortgages.

Still the curing plant went up rapidly in spite of cold snaps, when it was impossible to work in cement. It turned out to be an ugly, square building with a sort of insect countenance. This was due to the great number of pipes that stuck out of it like the eyes of an immense beetle.

There was a small stream which ran along the lower edge of the potato field and emptied into the river. During the midsummer months it was frequently dry, but in the winter and spring the water flowed steadily. Philrod declared that this was an ideal place for his potato seed beds, because there would be water to keep them moist. He made them along the bank, three feet wide, each one two hundred and fifty feet long. They were filled with stable manure, so much mulch and a soft sandy coverlet of loam. We had a carload of potatoes chosen from his last year's crop at the plant. Every



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

one of them, he assured me, was the "perfect pattern" of what a potato ought to be in size and form. These were treated with corrosive sublimate, three per cent in water—a sort of delousing bath to insure them against diseases and parasites. Before the end of March they were bedded and covered properly with sand and loam.

And Winch was turning land in the bottoms for corn and hay. I was resolved not to make the mistake of depending on one crop. The place must support man and beasts upon it and cover expense of cultivation. This was sound doctrine.

Philrod had his old potato planters down by this time and he was busy repairing them behind Winch's blacksmith shop. I was back there one day taking a lesson in what these machines could be made to do. They carried water tank and fertilizer distributor. There were two seats close to the ground behind for two men who handled the slips, and a rack above for a box or basket large enough to hold a thousand slips.

"We must have slow teams to draw these planters," he told me. "The slower the better."

"Mine creep," I assured him.

"And we must have boys to set the slips," he said.

"Why boys?" I wanted to know.

"Men who have farmed automatically for years,

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

doing always the same things, lose their mental activity. They lack the swift coördination between the brain and the hand necessary in this work," he explained.

I told him we should have no difficulty in having enough youngsters from sixteen to eighteen for the season.

"Oh, we shall not need them for more than two weeks. Ought to plant the whole field in ten days."

I came round the corner of the blacksmith shop counting on my fingers the boys available in the community for this work. I was looking down at my fingers as I named them, "Bill" and "Bob," and so on. Thus it happened that I stumbled into Black Manson.

"Good afternoon, Miss McPherson!" he exclaimed, laughing as I thrust my hands against him.

"How do you do!" I gasped.

"Shoeing a horse back there?"

"No, counting my fingers," I retorted.

"So I perceived. The forefinger on your left hand is named 'Billy' and the next 'Bob.' I distinctly heard you calling them by these—er—epithets. I was surprised."

"Eavesdroppers frequently are," I answered, smiling.

We were now in full view of the curing plant.

"Warehouse?" he asked, catching my eye after

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

he had swept this building with a glance and a grin.

"Yes, I suppose it is something of the sort," I answered.

"Looks like a livery stable."

"Well, it isn't!" I retorted.

"My car is over there at Tinkham's store. Want to go for a spin?"

"No, thanks," without making an excuse for this refusal.

"You have never asked me to Redfields," he suggested.

"No," I admitted.

He laughed.

"One other question," eyeing me provocatively.

"Well?"

"They are not all named, are they?"

"To whom do you refer?"

"Your fingers. I was wondering if I might have the honor of christening one of them—the third on your left hand."

My color rose. I hoped it looked like anger. Then the wings of my utterly feminine mind flew up and disclosed a thought, lightly and mischievously vindictive.

I regarded him with a widening smile.

"On one condition," I said.

"On any condition," he returned.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"That you will faithfully perform the task I had in mind when I was naming my fingers."

"I will," he answered so solemnly that I laughed.

"Though that is not the way such vows usually read," he added.

"Very well, you are employed then," taking no notice of his last remark.

"Employed?"

"Yes, your wages will be a dollar and a half a day."

"For how long?"

"Two weeks."

"And the third finger of your left hand is to be named for me, during that period. It's dirt cheap for such an honor!"

"Oh," drawing back from this proposition.

"I have your word," he reminded me.

"Very well. It makes no difference. I will notify you when we are ready for you."

"Now, will you ride with me?"

"No." Without the "thanks" this time.

We had reached the steps of Tinkham's store. He laughed, climbed into his car, lifted his hat and was gone.

I felt better, happier than I had felt in months. My breast seemed filled with a thousand fluttering



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

wings of happiness. I went in and pranced a step or two toward Mrs. Tinkham. Then I halted, astonished at the stern gravity of her expression.

"Nancy, do you know what is going on?"

"No."

"You haven't heard anything?"

"Not a word."

"Well, Bruce Armstead is drunk, crazy drunk. He is after Black Manson."

"What for?"

"On account of Bonnie."

She looked away.

"I don't say Manson is to blame. I doubt if he ever encouraged her. But a man doesn't have to encourage a girl like that. And she was crazy about him."

"What if she was?" I heard myself say.

"Well, Bruce wants to make something out of it. I have my reasons for thinking he has tried to blackmail Manson, and failed. Now it's out everywhere that he aims to get Manson! He and his gang are gathering down here at Shuckpen Eddy on the river. Claim to be Ku-Klux. I don't know what they are about. But Tinkham is all stirred up. And it takes something to rile Tinkham."

"When, when—"

"To-night," she answered this unfinished question.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“I was tempted to warn Manson just now,” she went on.

“Why didn’t you?”

“Well, some things ain’t a woman’s business.”

“Where is Mr. Tinkham?”

“I don’t know where he is. I don’t know where anybody is. There ain’t a man round here. I’ve got to take the mail over myself to the train,” bustling into the little post office.



## PART EIGHT

### CHAPTER XXIV

I hurried home after this talk with Mrs. Tinkham, too anxious to settle down in the library after supper as usual. I walked back and forth on the veranda. The weather was mild. There was a great silver moon in the east and the night was full of stars, like that first night after I came home in June. But now the air was laden with the faint fragrance of spring flowers. I could make out the long low pile of Black Manson's cabin in the edge of the forest on the hills beyond the river. But there was no light in the windows. He was not at home, I concluded with a sigh of relief.

Then as I faced about and came back toward the western end of the veranda I saw every window glowing.

My heart stood still. He was in this house alone, without any warning of what was brewing! Perhaps nothing was, perhaps something horrible. During this year night riders of one sort and another had committed frightful crimes.

I remembered having heard him tell the Locks



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

that he had at last put in a telephone, and laughingly refused to give the name of his exchange.

There are moments in every woman's life when her heart makes up her mind for her regardless of her plans and prejudices. I flew back into the house, called "information," and asked for Black Manson's number. An age seemed to pass before I received it, but almost at once after giving it to Central his voice came through to my ear.

"Well." The one word, spoken in the business tones of a man practiced in telephone tactics.

I recovered instantly from a flash of unreasonable resentment, realizing that he could not know yet who had called him.

"Mr. Manson, this is Nancy McPherson speaking."

"Best news I ever had over a wire," he returned, in a voice smoothed to a big round note of softness.

"Mr. Manson," I began.

"Yes, what is it? Please say it, anything!"

I understood from the lightness of this retort that he had no sense of impending danger, no thoughts beyond the insurgent thoughts a man thinks when he speaks to the woman.

"Can you come over this evening?" I asked.

"I shall be delighted," after the briefest hesitation. This capitulation had taken him by surprise, I inferred.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"If you could come at once," I began.

"Anything the matter? Your father—" in a serious tone.

"No," I interrupted. "I must see you. It is important."

"I am practically on my way!" with a puzzled laugh.

"Come through the fields; it is nearer," I said hurriedly, and hung up the receiver.

I dared not warn him, knowing that in that case he would remain there and defend himself.

But when I returned to the veranda five minutes later the lights were still burning in Black Manson's house. This meant that he had not left it. Presently I saw the figure of a man appear in the doorway, stand for a moment, then drift down into the darkness. But the lights still burned. I realized that he could not have been Manson. There was something angular, crooked and thin about that figure. I stood trembling, wondering what this meant. Some one had been in the house with Black Manson since he talked with me over the 'phone. For I was sure he was alone then, by the frankness and intimacy of his manner. And I had just time to see a man pass out of the doorway over there. I could not be mistaken. The light in the room had clearly defined him. The ringing of the telephone

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

bell startled me. I hurried in, took up the receiver and answered.

"Miss McPherson," came Black Manson's voice.

"Yes. Are you coming?"

"That's it. Impossible for me to get over to-night. To-morrow evening, any other day—"

"But I want you to come now," I interrupted.

"Tremendously good of you. I'm grateful, but you understand that under the circumstances I could not afford to be away from—well, my own house."

"Is there any one—are you alone?"

"Yes. Don't worry. Nothing will happen. Good night."

I went back onto the veranda and stood watching his house for a long time. Nothing moved up there and the lights glowed steadily, as if their business was to make this cabin the most conspicuous object for miles. Hours seemed to pass while I walked back and forth, resting at intervals on the wall, but always with my eyes fixed on those beacon windows in the cabin across the river. At last I heard faintly the barking of a dog far down the road. At the same moment I saw Manson bulk large in his doorway for a moment, then sit down on the step, his head and shoulders still outlined by the light behind him. Now in every direction for miles the dogs were barking their warning of passers-by in

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

the night. Presently I heard faintly the clatter of horses' hoofs coming nearer. And then the horror swept by, sheeted figures riding swiftly and silently along the road below. Then they appeared in the field, making no sound in the softer earth until they came to the river bridge, across which they swept like thunder, and up the hill, bunched together.

There was a succession of loud reports. I had one glimpse of the darkness blooming up there with long, red, bugle-shaped flowers. Then I seemed to die myself.

When I recovered consciousness the night was very still. I sat up and leaned against the column behind me. Manson's cabin showed dark against the rim of the hill. And once more I saw a man approaching, walking through the shadows on the lawn.

"Nancy," came a familiar voice. "What are you doing out here?"

"Doctor Fosberry!"

He sat down on the wall and grinned at me as if at last he knew something personal to me which was very gratifying to him.

"Manson asked me to stop by and in case you were awake—which you should not be; it is twelve o'clock—I was to tell you everything passed off nicely."

"Where is he?"



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Well, he should be in Cameron by this time, at the rate he was going," he interpolated. "Got Bruce Armstead hog-tied in the car with him, taking him to the sheriff. He is not badly hurt."

"Who is hurt?"

"Bruce. Manson got him through the shoulder. This ends his career as our official bad man, I imagine."

"But what happened, and what was it all about?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know. Spite, I suppose. Bruce gathered his gang to-night, went over to call on Manson. Meant mischief all right. Manson was waiting for him; could have killed him. The others turned tail. I thought sure from the racket we'd find a dozen dead men."

"You knew they were coming?"

"Tinkham got wind of it somehow. He was at Manson's early in the evening. Let him know what was on foot. Couldn't budge Manson. Then he came on to tell me. We were just coming through the woods on the other side when the show began. All we saw of it was a dozen sheeted horsemen flying in every direction and Manson standing with his foot on Bruce Armstead's neck as we turned the corner of the house. It's refreshing, a thing like that!" he concluded amiably.

"But is it lawful?"

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Oh, yes, perfectly legal. Racket wake you?"

"Yes."

"Manson thought it might disturb you," looking down at me, still fully dressed, with a thoughtful air. "So he asked me to come by. Now you must be off to bed," taking me by the hand and guiding me gently into the house.

"Can you make it?" at the foot of the stairs.

"Oh, yes," I quavered, setting my foot tremblingly on the step.

"I say, Nancy," he interrupted, "look here."

I held to the banister and regarded him with what the novelist calls a "piteous look."

"Don't be a fool, lass. The best men won't stand too much of it. You know what I mean."

"Who advised me to fight Black Manson, and to hold this place, and to—to—" I stammered off into tears.

"Yes, yes, I did, and you are coming fine. You are sure to win out. Philrod has told me all about the potato business. But while you are about it take all that's coming to you."

"I'll have the land first, every acre of it. That's as far as I have got in my plans," I answered with a tearful smile.

"Um-hump!" he said, whatever that may mean. But he had the manner of one who bears away with him important information.

## CHAPTER XXV

It was the middle of May before the potato slips were ready to put out. And there were eleven youths champing at the bits, waiting for the very novel experience of sitting under these rickety old machines to do this work. But there were only eleven of them, Philrod pointed out, and for six planters he needed twelve boys. He would be ready to begin the next morning. The season was fine, and there was no time to lose.

“Could you use a very tall man?” I asked.

“Oh, I could use anything whose two hands are connected with his brains,” he replied irritably.

“Very well. I think we can get him,” I said, hurrying into the house.

Ten minutes later I dispatched the following note to Black Manson:

REDFIELDS HOUSE, May 20, 1921.

*Dear Mr. Manson:* You will recall an agreement we made sometime in March to the effect that for the privilege of christening one of the smaller fingers on my left hand you would do the same work at the same wage that Bills and Bobs demand. I should not remind you of this contract so lightly

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

made, but we are short a hand for the planters. And I am therefore asking you to report to Mr. Philrod in the morning at five o'clock.

Believe me, my dear Mr. Manson,—

Cordially yours,

NANCY MCPHERSON.

Since the night of the attempted assault upon him by Bruce Armstead he had been a frequent visitor at Redfields. But I had not too meekly regarded Doctor Fosberry's advice about making a fool of myself. I practiced a sort of romantic neutrality, which at first encouraged and finally incensed Manson. His uncertainty arose not from the fact that he was a man of the world prepared to make concessions if he must, but from the fact that I was a woman of the world, highly proficient in the arts of this profession where men were concerned, and probably secretly vindictive besides so far as he was concerned.

The next morning I went to the potato field, arriving at eleven o'clock, late enough for the labor and heat of the day to have taken effect upon any man not designed by Nature for the planting of slips by this method. I wore a summer frock, a garden hat, proud high-heel pumps and a pleasant smile.

Six teams were creeping along the rows in the field, six planters creaked behind, and beneath every



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

one sat two men working with frightful rapidity to get a slip set correctly, every two feet of space.

Philrod caught sight of me and came on, walking very fast, as if anger had reached his lower extremities.

"This is no joke," he announced fiercely.

"No, it looks like business, doesn't it?" I answered amiably.

"What, what did you send Manson for?" he stutered.

"He applied for the job," I returned innocently.

"Applied for it, did he! Well, there's something the matter with him then!" he snorted.

"Why, is he inefficient?"

"Oh, he can plant slips. He can beat the field at that, but look at him!" waving recklessly at the machine which was now passing nearest where we stood.

I stared and rocked with silent mirth. Black Manson, wearing a fine white shirt and black-broadcloth trousers, sat folded up like a jackknife on his side of the planter. I could see only the back of his head between the huge knobs of his knees. But his hands were moving with the rhythm of a musician.

"He's been in that fix since five o'clock this morning. Never saw anything like it. And it won't do!"

"No, it will not. Why don't you turn him off?" I suggested.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Turn him off, eh? How? What will I say? He plants slips."

"Tell him he is physically unfit for this job."

He made a gesture. Did I think he would tell a man like that he was physically unfit? Not much!

"Well, ask him to resign then. That is the polite way of getting rid of a man," I said, walking away daintily along the edge of the field keeping pace with Manson's planter until I came again to the road which led back to Redfields house.

In the evening I had a call on the telephone from Manson. He wanted to know if he might come over.

I waited for him, seated in one of the old Windsor chairs on the veranda. He came up smiling, looking very fit in his formal evening clothes.

"Why did you have me discharged?" he asked, still smiling as he dropped into the chair beside me, giving it a turn which brought us face to face.

"Were you discharged?" I asked mildly.

"Amounted to that. Philrod told me you had called for my resignation. He was as formal about it as if I had been chairman of a committee!"

I laughed. Philrod certainly was totally deficient in humor.

"Why did you do it?" he repeated.

"It was a silly joke. I did not think you would carry it so far."

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"As a joke, no. I thought it was your woman's way of yielding."

"I don't understand," and I really did not.

"The wedding-ring finger."

"How absurd."

"Of course, but girls are sometimes."

"You mean they sneak through their own defenses to you?" regarding him with a curiosity which was slowly confirming into resentment.

"Something like that. And the prouder she is the more likely she is to do it," dropping the plural of "girls."

"You have had experience," I put in as a sort of footnote.

"We both have had experience. It has made you unscrupulous, more unscrupulous in dealing with your lovers than the shrewdest speculator in—well, shall we say, land?"

I was indignant. My conscience was so clear in this matter.

"We have been like lovers from the first," he went on.

"Like lovers!" I repeated indignantly.

"Of course we have. How else was I to interpret your antagonism? How else could you my unyielding attitude about the land? The whole thing was an 'act,' lovers who are skilled in love stage. The silly lines I said, your pretty silences. Your

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

flushes and smiles and tears. We know them all by heart. But I thought—" he finished this sentence with a look which subtracted something from me.

"Well, what did you think?" I demanded.

"I thought you were fair; a good sport, who could be trusted to play the trump card you held and finish the game right." He emphasized this last word.

"You have completely misunderstood me," I said, after taking a little time to decide whether he was still reciting the man's lines in this "act," and concluding that he was now off the stage.

"You think of me just as a woman," I went on.

"Just that. A man does. It is enough, heaven knows!" he retorted.

"Well, in this business I am not. I have felt all of a man's passion and purpose when it came to saving this property from your grasp."

"And you financed with all of a woman's arts. You have known from the beginning that I loved you, that I wanted you for my wife."

"I know that I have been nearer hating you than any man living," I fired back.

"I understood that. Most women love at first by hating. It is Nature's law."

Suddenly he leaned forward, caught both of my hands in his. "Nancy," he exclaimed, "you do love me. I have known it since the day of the storm."



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"I do not even hate you now. I feel that I shall win. This land, it will be mine again. I shall be able to pay the mortgage. The feeling I have, it is better than love, happier," I returned, regarding him calmly.

"And Big Woods?"

"All in good time," I retorted.

"If I gave it back?"

"For what?"

"To please you."

"I am not so easily pleased. I'll not be bound by the gift of what is already mine!" I cried.

He released me, leaned back and stared at me with a sort of pitying approval.

"What a brave one you are, my dear," he said gently. "How straight and cruel. Valor, it becomes you, but how you will suffer for this courage!"

"Don't patronize me with your compassion," feeling that hateful prescience of tears.

He had risen, as if to go. Now he looked down at me with a sort of smile.

"Why do tears in a woman's eyes always rebuke a man, however innocent he may be?" he asked softly.

"In mine they are the proof of anger," I retorted.

"And when you love and when you suffer, they come telling the truth of you. Well, I will not leave them there this time!"

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

The next moment he had drawn me to him, held me with my face lifted in his strong hand as he kissed my eyes. Then he returned me to the chair, much as if I were a token he had folded away—and was gone.

I felt very strange. I do not say virtue had gone out of me, but something had. If you are fair, if you have red hair, candid blue eyes and forty gifts of tears and smiles, it is not reasonable to reach the thirtieth year of your opulent youth without having been more or less kissed; but never before had such a thievery felt like a fatal accident. I suffered. I would never be the same again! And I am not. However many lovers one may have had there is at last, I believe, only one man's kiss that seals a woman's heart forever.

## CHAPTER XXVI

A week later I went into Tinkham's store on some small errand.

"Have you heard the news?" Mrs. Tinkham asked.

"Is there any?" I asked.

"Black Manson has gone," she announced.

"He is always going somewhere, isn't he?"

"He is gone for good this time, they say. Rented his crops and his house to some fellow out of the agricultural college. He's moved in, the man has. Got a wife and baby."

When I made no reply she looked up from the notion counter, caught my eye inquisitively.

"I reckon Manson's gone back where he came from," she said.

I said I knew nothing of the change in Mr. Manson's plans, that this was the first I had heard about it.

"Folks around here think you sent him the same way you sent that other fellow back to New York last fall," she laughed knowingly.

"One cannot be held accountable for what people think," I returned coolly.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

"Don't you ever expect to marry, Nancy?"

"Not wilfully," I answered, laughing in spite of myself.

"Well, I would if I were in your place and had the chances you throw away. That's two good husbands gone, you might have had."

"Oh, not two, Mrs. Tinkham!" I objected.

"Either one of 'em is what I meant. You will wish you had, first thing you know. Maybe you can be independent, make your own fortune, but you'll get ugly and sickly. Yes, you will," she insisted at the sound of my laughter. "And if you keep your health you'll get crotchety. Old maids are. They ain't right in their minds, I tell you!"

The spring waxed and warmed into summer days; long bright days of silence set to the tune of droning bees, filled with bloom and scent and the growth of every green thing. The world was noisy with strife. The time of accounting for deeds done during the war had arrived. There was a terrific defaulting of great men's reputations. There were the adjustments to be made to conditions of peace. No more patriotic wages for labor. We must economize, and we had lost the sense of thrift—therefore much futile preaching of thrift, while poverty, grim and grinning, came slipping by in rags to enforce thrift. The news was all bad. Strikers were strik-



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

ing. Capital was squalling under the burden of taxes. Politicians were raving and scheming and tearing at the fabric of this civilization. Yet it held, not by the laws and laws enacted nor by the deliberations of Congress nor the changing of political parties in power, but by the silent people behind these summer hills who worked the will of God in the land with a weary patience. The thing will hold together so long as capital makes profits, and the Government can raise taxes for prodigal expenditures and so long as the strikers and everybody else are fed. So it is the toilers on the land, ordained with the curse of Adam, who insure the peace and prosperity of the world; neither princes nor premiers nor presidents nor paunch-bodied congresses.

The press was laden that year with messages to farmers, urging them to save and work and produce big crops with as little expense as possible. But the farmers had no time to read this propaganda. They were up in the gray dawn of these long days and in their fields. And they were lost in the sleep of exhaustion before the night life of the propagandists began. There can be no labor-union hours for the man who wins his bread and yours from the earth.

This, my masters, was the only victory won against the disorders of the year 1921; the harvests that paid debts and fed the country and held back the furies of hunger.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

There was a long drought, but as it happened the seasons were favorable in these parts, and the crops good.

The potato field was a miracle of spreading green loveliness. In August Philrod relaxed. He became an agreeable man. The worst of it was over, he assured me. The potatoes were there. He thought the average would be above four hundred bushels to the acre. If we had a light frost early in October the harvesting would begin at once.

"There remains only the risk of curing them. After that we can take our time!" he said, rubbing his hands together.

"No danger of overstocked markets. No danger from railroad strikes. They will keep! keep! I tell you! And we could sell the last bushel of them right now."

"We might begin to sell as soon as possible," I suggested.

"Well, no. The prices will go up as soon as the uncured potatoes are out of the markets," he told me. "We must wait for a higher price. It costs fifty cents a bushel to raise, cure, load potatoes and ship them to the markets. That would leave a clear profit of one dollar at the lowest market price."

This, I figured hastily, meant forty thousand dollars. Well, not exactly, he said. We must take

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

six per cent off for waste, and the like. I was willing, on the assurance that we would exceed four hundred bushels to the acre.

My happiness was a singular thing those days. It consisted of an empty triumph over an enemy who had withdrawn from the field. I had heard nothing from Black Manson. I knew the time would come after the excitement of this achievement was over when I should be unhappy. I was even now vaguely desolate, with that hungering and thirsting after the mail one suffers when one hopes for letters which do not come. Finally one came from Katherine Lock. This was in September. They would be reasonably successful with their potatoes she wrote, but they had gone in on such a big scale that they could not hope for profits yet, not for two or three years. And she did not like Arkansas. It might be a good place for potatoes, but not for human beings as distantly related to sweet potatoes as she was!

She wondered if I had heard the news about Black Manson. "Poor Black," she wrote, "has had another turn! He has been out here with us for a month, just following his nose around. He has given up that farm he had in Georgia, expects to sell it this fall, he told Hammie. And he may or he may not go back to New York. Anyhow he left for the East last night. I told him he should get married. Nothing settles a man like having a wife hung like a

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

millstone round his neck. I have always blamed Hammie for not bringing him out to the house for dinner the evening you were there. He certainly was in love with you. But love is a thing you must fan in a man, or the poor little flame goes out! So there you are, Nancy darling, planning to be a potato queen when you might have been a social queen and the wife of a rich man. Well, I did my best. Now write me how you and Philrod are coming on with your potatoes. Is he as crabbed as ever?"—and so on and so forth.

The next mail brought a letter which told the world in the right-hand corner at the top of the envelop that it was from the New York Trust and Savings Bank. I had that sinking sensation one always feels when he receives a letter from his creditor. For it was through this concern that Lock had negotiated the loan of twenty thousand dollars with which I had financed my potato crop. The interest on this second mortgage would be due presently and as I opened the letter I supposed it contained a notification of this harsh truth.

My surprise was very great. It was in fact a letter from some official of this bank who informed me briefly that he represented Mr. Manson. Mr. Manson had requested him to sell the Big Woods property. He understood that this land was adjacent to my own plantation, had at one time been a



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

part of that estate. Mr. Manson had suggested therefore that I should be given the refusal of it. The price was six thousand dollars, exactly what it had originally cost. If I cared to purchase it the terms were easy. Mr. Manson's object, he believed, was to dispose of a piece of property in which he was no longer interested. If I was interested he suggested that I see Mr. Brown in Atlanta, who represented the New York Trust and Savings Bank and had instructions about making this sale.

Briefly, this was what the letter contained, but what it suggested to my mind cast me into the very dust of humiliation. I had probably borrowed that second twenty thousand dollars from Black Manson! I had given Black Manson a second mortgage on Redfields plantation through this bank. I was more than ever in the financial clutches of this man. It was like his sardonic impudence to place me in this position. Lock had been the unconscious instrument. It was natural that he should have applied to Manson for that loan, not knowing anything of the relations between us, but it was Machiavellian in Manson to take advantage of me.

I laid my head on my arm, leaning upon the old secretary in the library, and wept furiously. Then I thought of something else which cooled my rage and stanchd these tears like ice water. Granting that Manson had really meant to be generous in this

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

matter because he was in love with me, the fact that he now coolly offered Big Woods because he was "no longer interested in this property" was significant. When a man who has been your lover communicates with you through his agent it feels like divorce proceedings, and certainly indicates the termination of all relations. The last act of his indifference was to place within my reach what I claimed to value above love and every other consideration, the land, the whole of Redfields plantation. I had preferred to make my vows to this land, not to him.

I felt suddenly what a coldly impersonal thing the land is. You may indeed be from the dust of it, and you will certainly be returned to become the richer dust of it, but after all it is a part of the earth which swings in an orbit and turns herself this way and that to the warming sun, as regardless of you as of the smallest, palest flower that blooms somewhere quite by accident upon her mighty breast. In this awful moment I realized that for a woman to miss love was to miss the very breath and bloom of life.

Still I retained the mettle of the pasture from which I had sprung—a sort of courage. I could not afford to add to my indebtedness at this time, but I would buy Big Woods. Manson should not bluff me.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

I left for Atlanta the next day, reaching the city after the banks were closed and was obliged to wait until the next morning to see Mr. Brown. The purchase was made, the deeds were drawn and the bond for title given. I had three years in which to pay for Big Woods.

I returned to Redfields that afternoon, being obliged to take a taxi from Cameron because this train did not stop at Redfields station.

I cannot tell how it was, but as we came up from the public road through the two poplar trees on the lawn I was suddenly aware of a strange silence, as if some presence which belonged to this peaceful silence was gone. There was the sunlight, the poplar leaves turning like a thousand tiny fans in the wind. But somewhere in all this motion and brightness there was a stillness. This was a feeling I had, not a thought. We had scarcely reached the veranda before I thrust open the door of the car and was out looking about me with this strange startled feeling. What was the difference? Ah! the blinds of the windows were closed, as if after so many years this old house rested from some fever of life within. At the same moment the front door opened and I saw Mrs. Broadwick standing in it. She was no longer homely, she was majestic. Homely people can never be beautiful, but sometimes they can surpass mere human beauty, as the tops of mountains

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

surpass a pretty garden path. I thought all that later. Now I felt myself folded in her arms.

"What is it, what has happened here?" I cried.

"Your father. He has gone. Last night, quite peacefully," she said, leading me into the library.

I sat staring at her, a woman somehow replenished by this death.

"I was with him. He asked for me." A curious brightness passed over her face, like the light between shadows on that mountain top.

"Everything is done," she said, making a motion with her head toward the door of the parlor, which was closed. "He is in there alone with that other Kedie McPherson standing above him in his tall frame."

She stroked my hand.

"I am glad you were away. Youth was never meant to see death. But for me it was a privilege. It is strange after all these years, after life had come and gone from us, I still loved him!"

I caught one glimpse of the bliss which had transfigured her, and fell to weeping with my head upon her breast.



## CHAPTER XXVII

The end of October was at hand before I again left Redfields house. I was not ill, but the long strain took its toll suddenly of my strength. Mrs. Broadwick remained with me during these shadowy days when I lay too weak and listless to think or to suffer. It was not difficult to persuade her to take up her residence there during the coming winter months.

The first day I was able to sit in the sunshine on the veranda I heard her inside at the 'phone. She was talking to some one in the rambling tones of authority with which she invariably did business. I understood presently that she had Philrod on the line, and that Philrod was giving a satisfactory account of his stewardship.

"Well, you may come over this afternoon and tell Miss McPherson all that. She is up, but she needs a little stimulant to bring her to her feet and to her doing mind."

Philrod came, bearing a book, which he told me contained the "scriptures of the potato crop." I knew by his cat-whiskered grin that the news would be good.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

The potatoes were in the curing house, forty-four thousand bushels of the finest Nancy Halls he had ever seen. There would be sixty-eight carloads. That was not bad for the first year. He had been up night and day last week at the plant.

"Ticklish business, putting a hard coat of sugar on that many potatoes in four days!" he said. "Change of temperature, rain, might be fatal if you are not right there to regulate the heat accordingly."

"Just how is it done?" I wanted to know.

"Was that in the contract? That I should tell you how it is done?" he asked with a cunning grin.

"No, but I want to know just the same," I insisted.

He crossed his legs, primped his mouth until his gray mustaches stuck out like the wings of a moth, cocked his eye at me, and, I am sure, considered the unreliable nature of women as confidantes. He was entirely justified, as this record shows, because I am setting down here the important secret of this process of curing sweet potatoes. It is not a romantic statement, but the truth which in a few years will bring wealth to many farmers in the South who are now being reduced to starvation by the boll weevil. So much cotton land is adapted to the cultivation of sweet potatoes.

"In the first place we should have built a larger

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

curing plant. I shall be obliged to ship several carloads green. There was not enough bins to hold more than forty thousand bushels."

"Ship them at once. We need the money. I do most awfully," I put in.

"The weather was favorable. Good frost, no rain. I got them sorted and in the bins ten days ago. And I turned on the heat at once."

He lowered his voice to the conspirator's undertone.

"For four days and four nights I kept the temperature in every one of those bins up to seventy degrees. I had trays of calschloride at the place where the air goes into the pipes to dry it, absorb the moisture. This heat, and this method of keeping out moisture and taking it out for four days and four nights vulcanized the last one of them, you may say, with a hard coat of sugar, leaving the potato inside juicy and heavy, not dried out, because that is the old process, and we aim at keeping it in its original state. You can see what a difference that will make in the value of the potato as a food."

Yes, I understood.

"Then," he went on, "I cooled 'em down to forty-six degrees. Not so easy, that! Had to fan air out of a refrigerator one day. But they must be kept now at a temperature of forty-six degrees!"

"That is the secret," he added after a pause.

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

“And this is all you do?” I wanted to know.

He nodded his head affirmatively. “It’s enough to keep you on the jump, I can tell you, until the work is done. Too much heat ruins ’em. And they must be kept cool afterwards, not difficult during the winter and spring. All you have to know is how to manage your heating system and watch the changes in the weather while the curing is going on. You’ve got forty thousand dollars’ worth of potatoes now safe and ready for the markets, besides about two gross tons of green potatoes. Could not get them in. How does that strike you?” he asked with a broad grin.

I was elated. I wanted my coat and hat. We must go over there and look at those potatoes.

He was obdurate. Not yet! No opening of doors and fanning around in that place for another week!

Then he showed me his list of brokers, the prices they offered, the number of carloads each one would take.

“If Mr. Hoover knew about these potatoes he’d be shipping the whole lot to starving children somewhere on the other side!” I said.

“Well, they could be shipped all right, and there is more nutriment in one roasted sweet potato than in three or four loaves of bread.”

The prices of potatoes advanced steadily until



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

March, when we sold seed potatoes for two hundred and seventy dollars a ton.

In the back of a worn notebook I find this legend of that year's business; written with a pencil, the tip of which I must have moistened between my lips from time to time, because some of the figures are ferociously black, others dim, as if they appeared there timidly, feeling out of place in a lady's notebook, filled for the most part with shopping lists, and knowing very well that they were not arranged properly according to any system of book-keeping. Still I contend that the record had character, the personal touch, approaching the dramatic in its totals which cannot be found in any page written by an expert accountant. Here it is:

I owe first Redfields mortgage . . . . .	\$20,000
I owe second Redfields mortgage . . . . .	20,000
I owe interest on both . . . . .	3,200
I owe for Big Woods . . . . .	6,000
I owe for household and farm expense . . .	8,000

---

Total . . . . .	\$57,200
-----------------	----------

I made by sale of hay . . . . .	\$ 500
I made by sale of corn . . . . .	600
I made by sale of four milch cows . . . . .	200
I made by sale of potatoes . . . . .	43,000

---

Total . . . . .	\$44,300
-----------------	----------

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

Have paid first mortgage with interest ..	\$21,600
Have paid second mortgage with interest	21,600

Debts paid .....	\$43,200
Balance due, \$57,200 — \$44,300 .....	\$12,900

I still owe with interest, \$6,000 + \$12,900 \$18,900

N.B.—Must borrow \$10,000 to enlarge potato plant and finance next year's crop.

This is not a bad balance sheet, barring the somewhat emotional manner of its arrangement; not even the last item. For I was paying the legal rate of eight per cent on these mortgages. It was better to pay them off, because I could take this balance sheet into any bank and on the evidence it contained I could borrow money at six per cent.

The horrific thing that faced me in March, 1922, had not come upon me at the time I made out this report. I had heard of income taxes, but I had somehow cheerfully missed paying any. It was not until I received the blank forms through the mails that I made inquiries which eventually led to the loss of something like four thousand dollars of my income to the Government! It is not discreet to set down here what I think, and more particularly what I feel on this subject. I merely whisper my

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

doubt whether any league for peace can insure either peace or prosperity to a nation so burdened.

When I expressed myself freely to Mrs. Broadwick on this subject she said, shaking her head, "My dear, you are not a widow yet."

"No, indeed! Does that make it worse?" I asked, referring to these taxes.

"The head of a family gets an exemption of two thousand dollars, but if you have been a good and diligent woman all your life and a faithful wife, and if your children are all married and gone, and if your husband is dead, you can't claim exemption as the head of a family. The Government punishes you for raising your children so that they become prosperous and independent. And it punishes you for being a widow. You get no exemption as the head of a family because you have done well and raised your family and because your husband is dead. I still feel," she said, regarding me vaguely, "as if I were the only living head of my family. And you. Aren't you the head of this house?"

"I certainly am," I told her.

"Well, your Government will give you no credit for that. You will discover presently that it doesn't pay to earn much, and that if you lend money at eight per cent it will net you less than five per cent, and so increase your surtaxes that it will be money in your pocket to let your capital lie idle."

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

One stormy night in January I was sitting alone in the library. Mrs. Broadwick was there, but she was reading the morning paper, which she always did in the evening. And it was like a closed door between us, because she invariably held it spread wide. That day I had received the cancelled mortgages and I experienced only the relief of a dull depression. I was wondering hopelessly what women think about who have made away with too many lovers. I was wondering if anything could take the place of love in a woman's life. What was the reason for doing and achieving and making a fortune if there was no one to endow with these things? Here was a living example behind the paper over there, a very successful old woman who could not bring herself to make a will because she had no one to whom it would be natural and loving to leave her property.

Mrs. Broadwick lowered her paper and looked over the top of it at me so keenly that I felt guilty of this thought.

"Nancy, didn't you hear something?" she whispered.

"No, only the wind," I told her. She was always imagining that she heard something!

"But I did. I do! It is a car! There are the lights."

While she struggled to rise I hurried into the



## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

hall, wondering who could be coming where nobody came now except during the business hours of the day.

I flung the front door open. There was a rush of wind past a sort of lofty darkness which stood perfectly still on the threshold. I had one glimpse of his face, of eyes softer than the velvet darkness of a summer night. Then I flung myself upon his breast.

"Oh, my dear, you have come!" I whispered.

Not a word as he held me close, kissing my hair and eyes and me.

But I went on in the gasping whisper of perfect happiness:

"If you had not come I should have died, Black Manson!" I sobbed. "Not at once, but for years I should have gone on dying and—getting rich—and—"

I broke off in tearful laughter.

"Good heaven! Close the door. You'll catch your death of cold, Nancy!" we heard the voice of Mrs. Broadwick behind us.

And having waddled around to close the door herself, she fixed her eyes accusingly on Black Manson.

"Why have you waited all this time? Look at that child. She is thin. She is pale. A McPherson pale! She has been breaking her heart for you!"

"I had to go, and I had to wait until she won the

## A DAUGHTER OF ADAM

game," he laughed, looking down at her and still holding me to his breast.

"Come on in to the fire," Mrs. Broadwick commanded sensibly.

THE END











WERT  
BOOKBINDING  
Oranville, Pa  
Nov-Dec 1985  
We're Quality Bound



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00012696024